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## High Treason



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# High Treason

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**Essays on the History of the Red Army,  
1918–1938** by Vitaly Rapoport and Yuri Alexeev

Vladimir G. Treml, Editor

Bruce Adams, Co-Editor and Translator

Duke University Press    Durham 1985

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Treason is the most serious crime against the people.

—Constitution of the USSR, 1977, Article 62

Memory, however bitter, be a notch through ages.

—Tvardovsky

Naked truth breeds hatred. —Trediakovsky

Can we not praise the Fatherland without inventing miracles in its honor?

—Anonymous publicist from Orel, eighteenth century

It is vain in years of chaos

To seek a good end.

Some will kill and repent,

Others will end at Golgotha.

—Pasternak



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## Contents

Author's Preface	ix
Editor's Introduction	xi

### **Prologue: On the Eve of Catastrophe**

1	Assembly on Nikolskaia	5
2	Discord in the Face of Danger	12

### **Part I The Civil War: A Few Pages**

3	1918: The Birth of the RKKA	23
4	1918: Tsaritsyn	26
5	1918–1919: The Eastern Front	32
6	1919–1921: The First Horse Army	35
7	Mironov	45
8	1921: Suppression	77

### **Part II Those Turbulent Twenties**

9	The Party: Battle of the Lines, or the Fight for Portfolios	91
10	The Trojan Horse and the Cavalryman	105
11	Scholarly Arguments	127
12	Psychological Attack	142

### **Part III The Great Turning Point**

13	Personality in History: Role and Style	149
14	Attack on Headquarters	171
15	A Brief Flowering	177
16	The Seventeenth Congress: The Victors Dig Their Own Graves	194

### **Part IV Conspiracy Against the RKKA**

17	The Political Background: Coup d'État	219
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18	Preparing for the Harvest	233
19	Harvest	241
20	The Executioners: Modus Operandi	250
21	The Victims: Motives of Inaction	282
22	Voice of the People	292

### **Epilogue: The Bloody Hangover**

23	Conspiracy Against Peace	321
24	The Blindness	332
25	Retribution	339

Afterword	360
Appendixes	363
Notes	393
Index	422



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## Author's Preface

A number of people deserve credit for making the publication of this book possible.

I should start by recognizing the special role played by the editor, Professor Vladimir G. Treml. On the long road to the publication of this book his strong support and encouragement were decisive, and I can say without exaggeration that it was primarily due to his efforts that the manuscript reached the printing press.

Professor Bruce F. Adams, coeditor and translator, has done an excellent job of organizing the authors' often disjointed language. I watched his labors with admiration and can only hope that the travail of this book will not discourage him from other translations of Russian works.

It is difficult to find the proper words to express my warmest feeling of gratitude to two courageous and modest women—one American and one Russian—who undertook the risk of taking the manuscript out of the USSR. Regrettably, they must remain unnamed here.

There is another group of people, also to remain unnamed, who have left an important imprint on this book. These are the people who generously provided us with information and sources, often unique, about the events discussed in this book. Our deepest gratitude is extended to them.

And last but not least I must recognize the support and encouragement given me by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research and the Center for Planning and Research and their executive officers, respectively, Vladimir Toumanoff and Richard Laurino.

This preface is written by me alone, for the simple reason that my coauthor, Yuri Alexeev, is in the USSR. Because of the distance and other factors he could not join me in writing this, but, I am certain, he shares the sentiments expressed.

Vitaly Rapoport  
New York  
January 30, 1985



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## Editor's Introduction

The phenomenon and the term samizdat are by now well known to the Western reading public. Facing archaic and oppressive censorship, Soviet authors have circulated their manuscripts in typewritten form throughout the country. Since the late 1950s, these manuscripts have made their way to Western publishers in ever-increasing numbers. However, by far the largest share of samizdat smuggled out of the USSR and published in the West consists of belles lettres, memoirs, and a genre of eyewitness stories. Unfortunately, little of substance has appeared of scholarly or scientific literature. This is not too surprising. Novelists, poets, memoir writers—even under oppressive Soviet conditions—can write in relative safety in the privacy of their homes. Historians, philosophers, economists, and sociologists find themselves in a much more restricted situation as they seek access to libraries, laboratories, special data banks, archives, and the like, where the very nature of their interest or topic, and the absence of an official imprimatur, make access difficult if not impossible.

There are, of course, some exceptions, particularly in a broadly defined genre of social commentary and in historical writing; but unfortunately there are very few.

The Rapoport–Alexeev book is one such exception: A set of carefully researched and documented essays on the history of the Red Army. The book is not an eyewitness account of clashes between the military and the Party, or of purges of Red Army commanders, nor is it a memoir, as neither of the authors was directly involved in the described events.

Vitaly Rapoport was born in Dnepropetrovsk in the Ukraine in 1937. As a young boy he survived the German invasion and the ravages of his homeland. His father was fortunate to survive, so his family was not destroyed by the war as were so many others. But, as were many others in the generation that survived the war, Vitaly Rapoport was haunted by persistent questions raised by the early defeats of the Red Army, by the country's devastating losses. Although trained in

engineering and management, Rapoport continued to pursue his true interest—history. In the early 1970s he met a person with a similar and equally strong interest, Alexeev. Since Alexeev—a pseudonym—is still living in the USSR, we cannot say much about him, except to indicate that he is somewhat older than Rapoport.

The two men collaborated in research and study and wrote the book, which was completed in 1977. In the late 1970s the manuscript was smuggled out of the Soviet Union by a young American student who, although known to the editor, must remain unnamed. But both authors acknowledge with gratitude this person's courageous help.

Rapoport came to the United States in 1980 and now lives in New York with his family.

How does one write a history book exploring issues the government would not want explored, discussing personalities that libraries would not want to admit existed?

As the reader will see, the authors went meticulously through available historical and periodical literature. The authors also availed themselves of samizdat manuscripts circulating in the country—see, for example, the story of Mironov. One way or another they also got hold of some historical works published in the West, but these were clearly not among their major sources. Some events described in the book—for instance, the kidnapping of General Kutepov in Paris—are obviously based on such Western sources and, as obviously, suffer because the authors could not find more comprehensive and more scholarly works. The authors were fortunate to be able to talk to many contemporaries of described events, and in some instances to relatives of some of the military personnel depicted in the book, and to read the notes and incomplete memoirs of some others. They also had opportunities to examine documents in restricted archives. For easily understood reasons these interviews and archival documents cannot be fully footnoted and referenced.

Western experts must make their own judgments as to the authenticity of this book based largely on its contents. Obviously, the authors know a great deal about Soviet military history. It is quite possible that some of the events that we learn from this book did not happen quite that way. Perhaps we shall never know, but the evidence presented here is as good as we are likely to obtain in the foreseeable future. After a careful reading of the original Russian-language text, after consultation with Western authorities on Soviet military history and discussions



with the author Rapoport, I am convinced of this document's authenticity and of its importance to scholars.

The book carries the reader through the formation of the "Red Army of Workers and Peasants," the Civil War, the growing role of the Communist Party in matters not only of ideology but of military doctrine and strategy, the modernization of the early 1930s to the devastating purges of the end of the decade and their tragic consequences in the early part of the war.

Western readers are familiar with many events and developments described in the book, but the reliability of original sources of historical writing in the West on this subject matter is not uniform. Some events have been well researched, documented, and analyzed while others have been only roughly sketched out in sources of varying reliability and in different monographs. In particular, no single history of the early days of the Red Army has been published in the West. In this respect, the Rapoport and Alexeev book is invaluable, as it brings together the early history in a single, well-integrated narrative. The book also brings to light new facts and offers new interpretations of known developments, such as Stalin's role in the Polish campaign, early purges of Soviet military academicians and theoreticians, and the role played by Stalin's cronies from Civil War days.

The book also offers numerous fascinating anecdotes—most of them unverifiable but credible. We find described here such events as an abortive attempt by security forces to arrest Stalin's Civil War crony Budenny, details of the elimination of the security head Ezhov, Voroshilov's endless blunders, the story of the absence of Blucher from the bench of judges in the first major trial of top military commanders. Parenthetically, we should note that most Western historians concluded that there was no trial and that the accused, including Marshal Tukhachevsky, were shot immediately after the arrest. Rapoport and Alexeev offer conclusive evidence that the trial did indeed take place, although the defendants were judged guilty and the sentences determined prior to the trial.

The book differs from most dissident literature by focusing on the damage inflicted by Stalin on the Red Army. The many historical sketches of military leaders of the period and the detailed discussions of military strategy indicate that the authors are directing their book to an audience of professional military people and others with an interest in military history. The book is very sympathetic to the Red Army

military professionals and hostile to the political party and the political generals of the period. Professional military leaders making contributions to the strategy, operations, organizations, and training of the Red Army are generally treated as heroes and patriots. The complicity of many of these officers in repressive measures of the Party against the people is generally passed over without comment (as in the case of Tukhachevsky). However, high-ranking officers close to Stalin are generally treated with disdain. The authors leave no doubt about their belief that the Army leaders of the period could have and should have taken action to resist Stalin's purge of the officer corps.

The authors somewhat exaggerate the capabilities of the Army of this period. They characterize the Army as "strong enough to face any enemy. It is impossible to imagine that the [Red Army] would have surrendered half the country to Hitler" in the absence of the purge of the officer corps. While the purge undoubtedly weakened the Red Army, many experts would be skeptical of these claims about the Red Army's capabilities, since the relatively inexperienced Red Army would still have had to face a battle-tested German army that had the initial advantages of timing and other conditions in the attack.

On the other hand, the Red Army had considerable strengths, including outstanding theorists, before the Stalinist purges. But a more detached historian would have at least raised the possibility that the poor performance and morale of the troops could also be explained by the fact that the majority of soldiers in 1941 and 1942 were young peasants with vivid memories of the brutality and harshness of forced collectivization. Of course, the collectivization was directed by Stalin and the Party, but the leaders of the Red Army—Tukhachevsky, Yakir, Blucher, and others—carry some of the responsibility.

The authors attempt to answer perhaps the most significant question relating to these events: Why did the accused leaders (both political and military) not resist more effectively the repressions of Stalin? For the political leaders, the authors suggest that they were so closely identified with the Bolshevik Party and its bloody rule after the Civil War that they basically "had no path back to the people."

The Army leaders were in a stronger position. They had command of the military forces; and as the authors suggest, the Army could win any conflict with the police forces. Yet they made no effort at rebellion against the Party. In addition to a failure of moral courage, the authors contend that there were other factors. They suggest that Yakir was a

true idealist and believer in the revolutionary cause. He could not attack Stalin without attacking the Party and the cause, which were dearer to him than his safety. They suggest another set of motives for Tukhachevsky. He was supposedly very egocentric. Since all his honors and position flowed from the Party and the system, he could not attack them without destroying the things he loved most.

The authors provide many chapters describing the historical development of the Red Army and clearly indicate what they consider to be good and bad in the officer corps. In keeping with recent Soviet scholarship about the Civil War, the authors give primacy to the Red Army (RKKA) activities on the Eastern Front over the more publicized activities on the Western Front. The Eastern Front "was the furnace in which the RKKA was forged." It was here that the commanders who formed the real professional core of the RKKA in the postwar period were developed. These included I. I. Vatsetis and S. S. Kamenev, both commanders-in-chief during the Civil War, and emerging leaders, such as M. V. Frunze and M. N. Tukhachevsky.

In contrast, the authors denigrate the reputation of some commanders and units that emerged during the Civil War. Their greatest disdain is reserved for the leadership of the First Horse Army—a unit "sacrosanct in Soviet military history." In popular memory "only the [exploits] of the 30,000-strong Horse Army have been preserved." The authors indicate that in the 1920s and 1930s the officers of this unit "dominated the leadership of the armed forces" to the detriment of both strategic concepts and readiness for war. During the period between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the "Fatherland War" cavalry leaders running the Red Army included K. E. Voroshilov (1925–40), S. K. Timoshenko (1940–41), and A. A. Grechko. Marshal Grechko was minister of defense from 1967 to 1976. Others reaching deputy ministerial rank included S. M. Budenny, G. I. Kulik, and others who ultimately proved inadequate: "Only when actual combat began [Fatherland War] was the unfitness of [these leaders] revealed."

The major debunking of Stalin's military reputation concerns his behavior immediately before and during the Fatherland War. In addition to having almost fatally weakened the Army through the purge of the military leadership, Stalin is pictured as not being alert to the imminence of a German attack in 1941 and exhibiting a lack of understanding of the proper strategy for meeting such an assault.

The authors cite evidence that Soviet intelligence first obtained infor-



mation about preparations to attack the USSR "only a few days after the German general staff began to work on it." Throughout the period of about a year during which preparations were being made, information continued to flow in from many sources, including Richard Zorge, the Soviet master spy. This information was not acted upon, primarily because a "fear of war paralyzed Stalin." The authors are convinced that he "feared war, primarily because he felt his own incapacity as a leader. He also understood that the real military leaders had been destroyed at his personal orders." Statements attributed to Khrushchev in *Khrushchev Remembers* tend to confirm this view. Stalin knew as a result of the Finnish War that the Army was not ready to fight a first-class adversary.

Having revealed the crimes of Stalin and his henchmen, the authors reflect on the fact that the guilt must be shared by everyone in the Soviet Union. They indicate that "there is something not quite right with ourselves . . . . It is toleration of evil and submissiveness to unjust authority." In a chapter entitled "Personality and History" the authors reject the notion that Stalin was the critical determinant of Soviet post-revolutionary development. "The system gave birth to Stalin. Not otherwise." Lenin had concentrated power at the center and had allowed the development of a powerful *Apparat* that under Stalin would crush the Party. The people's willingness to accept strong leadership together with "insignificant development of legal consciousness, service docility . . . greatly increased the chances that such a personality would emerge."

The authors believe it was unlikely that other leaders could have acted much differently from Stalin and still retained power. However, the authors make a call for greatness in each individual: "Even if we accept the existence of historical predestination, still every statesman, every man in general, has the choice to be a weapon of the inevitable or not." The authors see hope only in purging the past by telling the full truth. "The spiritual rebirth of the country is impossible while evil remains hidden away, unjudged, while the triumphant lie paralyzes our will, devours our soul, and lulls our conscience."

In this manner, the authors end their history of the Red Army. They have provided a document that could have an impact both in the Soviet Union and in the West. In particular, the document illuminates political-military relationships of the past and provides important insights into the future.



The polemical style of the text may bother some readers who are used to a more detached and balanced narrative. But here lies one of the fascinating aspects of the book, and the constant presence of the emotional dimension of the unfolding tragic events has a cumulative impact upon the reader.

A Western scholar also will find some weaknesses and shortcomings in the book—both in style and substance.

The treatment of some events and the analysis of some developments, particularly of a political and economic nature, is oversimplified and somewhat naive. For example, modernization of the Red Army and creation of the modern defense industry in the early 1930s is discussed against the background of rapid industrialization launched by the first Five-Year Plan and forced collectivization. The cost of collectivization was enormous: ten million human lives by Stalin's own admission as well as huge losses of livestock. However, Western readers will probably find the authors' description and analysis of collectivization simplistic, naive, and somewhat exaggerated. Both Western and Soviet scholarship today offer a somewhat more balanced view.

The most significant aspect of this powerful and angry book is that it was fully researched, documented, and written in the USSR\* and thus offers us a picture of the attitudes, knowledge, and understanding of history by a segment of the Soviet public. Among other things, it shows that the omnipotent Soviet censor has not been particularly successful in suppressing or distorting events in history.

*High Treason* is not a definitive history of the Red Army and the Party and Stalin's role in its development. Such a definitive book cannot and will not be written for a long time. But it offers us an important new and comprehensive picture of this history, and it offers us invaluable insights into the understanding and knowledge of this history by the Soviet public.

Vladimir G. Trembl  
Duke University  
April 1985

\*It must be stressed that except for a few corrections and the addition of some editorial explanatory notes, the text is as it was when carried out of the USSR. The translator has deliberately not edited out the non-English-speaker style of the Russian authors.



# **Prologue**

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## **On the Eve of Catastrophe**





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This is what they said before their execution.

Army Commander Ion Yakir: "Long live Stalin!"

Marshall Mikhail Tukhachevsky: "You are shooting not us, but the Red Army."

Both proved to be prophets. Stalin reigned another decade and a half, and in the year or two after Tukhachevsky's death the high command of the Red Army was destroyed almost to a man, losses unthinkable in the heaviest military campaign. Men who had created the Red Army, who had led it to victory in the Civil War and had turned it into the best army in Europe, fell victim to this Bartholomew's Night.

A short while later, German tanks roared to the outskirts to Moscow, while Stalin, "the most brilliant commander of all times and all nations," feverishly considered plans to save himself.

Almost twenty years had to pass before the destruction of our Army was recognized as a crime. And no one was ever punished. The greater part of the facts and details have not been publicized, nor has anything been said to this day about how it could have happened.

To remain silent about the destruction of the Red Army is to abuse the memory of the innocent dead. To be silent is to betray the interests of the Motherland. Without the publication of such tragic events—without a merciless analysis of them—it is impossible to reach conclusions vital to us, to our children, and to our grandchildren. Without such an analysis, there is no reason to study history.

Our aim is not to call for revenge or retribution. It is not yet in our power to give an exhaustive historical analysis. That will be the task of our descendants who will have the necessary documents. This is a history of what is already known, although not known with absolute certainty.

#### 4 Prologue

This book is awkward and confused, with many gaps and much vagueness; it does not claim to be academic. It can be only a reminder of a great tragedy. It is a small stone at the foundation of a future memorial to the Army that was shot in the back.

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# 1 Assembly on Nikolskaia

Nikolskaia Street is especially rich in historical monuments.

—A Moscow tour guide, 1903<sup>1</sup>

The incident with which we begin our story occurred on Nikolskaia Street, the oldest street in the Kremlin settlement, Kitaigorod. It was along this street, already seven centuries old, that the roads to Vladimir, Suzdal, and Rostov Veliky (the Great) once led from the Nikolskie Gates of the Kremlin.

The air here is filled with Russian history. Moscow's oldest monastery was built on Nikolskaia in the thirteenth century; Russia's first book was printed there in the sixteenth century; it was along Nikolskaia that Prince Pozharsky pushed the retreating Poles back to the Kremlin; some seventy years later Russia's first institution of higher learning opened on Nikolskaia.

From ancient times Nikolskaia had been a center for monasteries and cathedrals, for bookish wisdom and bustling commerce. In the middle of the last century it was one of the main business streets of the city. "Home after home, door after door, window after window, everything from top to bottom was hung with signs, covered with signs as if with wallpaper," wrote Kokorev in his memoirs.<sup>2</sup> At the turn of the century it was filled with expensive commercial buildings. It was the first street in Moscow to be paved with asphalt.

In the days of the October Revolution the street saw battles between the Reds and cadets. Under War Communism it fell briefly quiet, but with the advent of the New Economic Policy (NEP) it once again hummed with trade and commerce. As before, it teemed with warehouses, stores, and offices. But a change in its fate was already creeping upon it, standing in the wings. The Slaviansky Bazaar had already been given into the care of various Soviet organizations headed by *Osoaviakhim*.<sup>3</sup> A famous hotel, in whose restaurant Russian composers had feted Dvořák, closed its doors. Stanislavsky had sat there with Nemirovich over wine and hors d'oeuvres for more than a day discuss-

ing the founding of the Khudozhestvenny (Art) Theater. The upper rows of shops, more than a quarter of a kilometer long, glass-roofed, built in the old Russian style, was turned into GUM, the State Universal Store. Tsentroarkhiv was moved into the Holy Synod's Press, Chizhovsky Court became quarters for the Revolutionary Military Council. But these were just minor changes.

The year 1932 brought the reconstruction of Moscow, which struck Nikolskaia no less forcefully or painfully than earlier fires. Its former name was lost; it became 25 October Street. At the same time many of its remarkable buildings were razed. The Kazan Cathedral with its miraculous icon of the Kazan Mother of God disappeared. In place of the cathedral, which had been erected by Prince Pozharsky to mark the end of the Polish invasion, there is now a lawn and a public toilet. Practically nothing remains of the Zaikonospassky monastery, in which Simeon Polotsky had founded the first higher ecclesiastic school in 1682, the Greek-Slavic-Latin Academy. The great Lomonosov, the mathematician Magnitsky, the poets Kantemir and Trediakovsky, the geographer Krasheninnikov had all studied there. The founder of the Academy had been buried in the sacristy amid the magnificent church valuables.

The ancient buildings of the Nikolsky Greek monastery with its two churches and the chapel that held the miraculous icon of St. Nicholas the Miracle-worker also disappeared. The monastery had been founded by Ivan the Terrible. Kantemir was buried in its walls.

The Bogoiavlensky monastery, founded in 1276 under Prince Danil, was destroyed. Of its five temples only one, the Bogoiavlensky cathedral, survived. It became home for some shops and now stands without its cupola, chipped and peeling, deteriorating before one's eyes. In the 1920s a Soviet guidebook called it "one of the finest creations of Moscow baroque. Its stone fretwork is so light and delicate that it gives the impression of lacework. Within the cathedral there are sculpted images ('the coronation of the Mother of God'), which are a great rarity in Moscow's Orthodox churches." Not a trace remained of the Lower Kazan church of the monastery, which had enclosed the burial vault of the Golitsyn princes, "a whole museum, beautifully representing the whole development of Russian sculpture of the eighteenth century."<sup>4</sup>

The walls of Kitai-gorod with the Vladimir gates and the nearby cathedral of the Vladimir Mother of God were destroyed. Now the way was clear from the Kremlin to the Lubyanka (Dzerzhinsky Square),

from the location of the Soviet government to the home of its main organ, the organ of security.

But the historical role of Nikolskaia had not ended. At its far end on the left side, facing away from the Kremlin and beyond the Ferrein pharmacy, there remained an unimposing three-story building, that of the Central Military Procuracy. Built in 1830, it was famous only for the fact that Stankevich had lived there a long while and Belinsky had been a frequent visitor. On the morning of May 11, 1937, a meeting began in that building. The ranks and responsibilities of the men who met there suggest that this was a meeting of the highest military leaders of the country: Deputy People's Commissars of Defense, the Chief of the General Staff, military district (*okrug*) commanders, department chiefs of the People's Commissariat, four of the five Marshals of the Soviet Union, all four Army Commanders First-Class, a Flag Officer of the Fleet First-Class, four Army Commanders Second-Class, and others.

If a few details are added, the picture changes. A meeting was going on, but it was the sort of meeting that military officers have only rarely to attend. One group, in full dress uniform, was seated at a long table. The second group, in military uniforms from which all decorations and medals had been torn, sat behind a barrier.

It seems natural now that Military Jurist of the Army First-Class V. V. Ulrikh, Chairman of the Military College of the Supreme Court of the USSR, sat at the head of the table. He is a famous man: in the 1920s he had chaired the trial of Savinkov; just recently, in August 1936 and January 1937, he had conducted the infamous "Moscow trials" with Vyshinsky.<sup>5</sup> His colleagues at this meeting were: Army Commander Second-Class Ia I. Alksnis, Deputy People's Commissar and Commander of the Air Force (vvs); Marshal V. K. Blucher, Commander of the Separate Far Eastern Army of the Order of the Red Banner; Marshal S. M. Budenny, Deputy People's Commissar and Inspector of the Cavalry; Division Commander E. I. Goriachev, Commander of the Sixth Cossack Cavalry Corps named for Comrade Stalin; Army Commander Second-Class P. I. Dybenko, commanding the Leningrad Military District; Army Commander Second-Class N. D. Kashirin, commanding the North Caucasus Military District; Army Commander First-Class B. M. Shaposhnikov, Deputy People's Commissar and Chief of the General Staff. Of the eight military judges, seven, unlike Ulrikh, were new in their roles and uncomfortable, possibly from lack



of experience. All of them were illustrious commanders of the Red Army and among its distinguished organizers.

The same is true to an even greater degree of those on trial. One has only to leaf through any history of the Civil War published before 1937 or after 1956 to find their names, usually linked with the most complimentary epithets. There were eight of them also: A. I. Kork, Army Commander Second-Class, Superintendent of the Frunze Academy; Corps Commander V. M. Primakov, deputy commander of the Leningrad Military District; Corps Commander V. K. Putna, military attaché in England; Marshal M. N. Tukhachevsky, until May 11, 1937, the First Deputy People's Commissar and Chief of Combat Preparedness of the Red Army (RKKA), and until May 26, commander of the Volga Military District; Army Commander First-Class I. P. Uborevich, commander of the Belorussian Military District; Corps Commander B. M. Feldman, chief of the Central Administration (*Glavnoe upravlenie*) of the RKKA; Corps Commander R. P. Eideman, chairman of *Osoaviakhim*; Army Commander First-Class I. E. Yakir, commander of the Kiev Military District.

Except for the People's Commissar, Marshal K. E. Voroshilov, the whole high command of the Red Army was present. Several observers were as highly ranked as the others present: Marshal A. I. Egorov, Deputy People's Commissar, who was responsible for maintaining order in the court; Flag Officer of the Fleet First-Class V. M. Orlov, Deputy People's Commissar and Commander of the Navy; Division Commander M. F. Lukin, Military Commandant of the City of Moscow.

Despite the similarity of titles and service records of the judges and the defendants there was an important difference between them, one that had been noted long before. Those on trial were the cream of the Army intelligentsia, authors of fundamental scholarly works, path-breakers of new ways to organize the Army, and pioneers of new methods of armed combat. The others, with the exception of Shaposhnikov and Alksnis, were intrepid warriors and swashbucklers, strangers to theoretical research, reactionaries and careerists. Although they were all exceptionally brave men, their intellectual levels were clearly unequal, and their views on the majority of military questions were diametrically opposed. We will show below that the composition of the two groups was not accidental and that it was not only disagreements about the future development of the Army that led them to this hall.

June 11, 1937. Some of the leaders judged, others were judged. In

a relatively short time most of the judges lost their lives in similar circumstances. For some this happened in just a few months, for others in a year or two. It is possible that some of them sensed what would happen. But we had better not jump ahead.

Why were the honored commanders being tried? It is still hard for us four decades later to answer that question. Contemporaries were in an even more difficult position. The following announcement appeared in the papers that day:

#### IN THE PROCURACY OF THE USSR

The case of those arrested at various times by the NKVD [there followed the names of those now familiar to us]. . . . They are accused of violating their military oaths, of treason against the Motherland, of treason against the peoples of the USSR, of treason against the RKKA.

Investigative materials have established the participation of the accused, and also of Ia. B. Gamarnik, now deceased by suicide, in antigovernment associations with leading military circles of a foreign state, which conducts an unfriendly policy toward the USSR. In the service of the military intelligence of that state, the accused systematically provided military circles with information about the condition of the Red Army, carried out acts of sabotage to weaken the strength of the Red Army, attempted to ensure the defeat of the Red Army in case of a military attack on the USSR, and had as their goal the reestablishment of the power of landlords and capitalists in the USSR.

All of the accused admitted their full guilt to charges against them.

The case will be heard today in a closed session of the Special Court of the Military College of the Supreme Court of the USSR: [there followed the composition of the court].

The case will be heard in accordance with the law of December 1, 1934.

That was all Soviet citizens could learn from the papers. This was the only announcement to appear about the trial.

We will refrain for the time being from an analysis of the document, but we note the obvious roughness of the style, which permits us to surmise that it was hastily written. We will summarize briefly the main points. The accused were agents of foreign intelligence (espionage and

subversive activity). They conspired to cause the defeat of the country in war and the overthrow of the government (treason against the state). The sentence, in all probability, would be passed that very day; the phrase, "the case will be heard today," suggests this. Otherwise it would have read "will begin." The reference to the law of December 1, which provided for accelerated procedure for trials of enemies of the people, supports this interpretation.

And that is how it was. The sentences were passed on June 11 and carried out that day and the next. The trial was not covered in the press—not then, not later. Therefore the public, and inner party circles as well, remained ignorant of it. In this way in just a few hours the flower of the command of our Army was condemned without appeal.

Let us try to reconstruct the trial. The information we will use is fragmentary and exists only in accounts transmitted by word of mouth. Not all can be verified. Although sometimes we will have to deal with myths, we will not scorn them. Our people are necessarily great creators of myths, because much of our history is concealed from us. Myths are not arbitrary fabrications: their foundations are real; and in this case, more often than not they are bloody.

The trial began at 10:00 A.M. The charges were as imprecise as in the newspaper, although more involved. No documents or other material evidence was introduced at the trial.

The charges against three of the accused are well known. Tukhachevsky: organization of a revolution to overthrow the government, association with German intelligence, and moral degradation (this is what a weakness for the fair sex is usually called in official papers).

Yakir was also accused of attempting to overthrow Soviet power and of associating with Germans. In his case there were specific details, but they were not entirely clear. Yakir was incriminated by association with his subordinate D. A. Shmidt, who had been arrested in 1936. Shmidt had been commander of what was then the only heavy tank brigade in the RKKA. According to one story, Yakir ordered Shmidt to keep the brigade prepared to move against Moscow. In another version he ordered Shmidt to destroy his equipment or to render it useless. It is unclear which of these accusations was brought against the Army Commander. All that is known is that Shmidt, according to the People's Commissar of the NKVD, made both statements, or rather signed them.

Uborevich was accused, in part, of intentionally having left breaches in the border defenses of Belorussia, the construction of which he had



overseen, to make it easier for the enemy to break through. It is true that there were breaks in the line, but these were related to local conditions. In the area of Pinsk, for example, defensive works, moved back behind impenetrable swamps, were of course strengthened. When Shaposhnikov, a member of the court, asked Uborevich why the defenses had been moved, however, Chairman Ulrikh disallowed it as a leading question.

So far as we know, the other defendants were charged with working for German intelligence and deliberately weakening the combat strength of the Red Army.

All eight pleaded not guilty to all charges. In the surviving typed report of the trial their "noes" were changed in ink to "yeses." An exception was made only for Tukhachevsky, who refused to answer any further questions. The other seven continued to deny everything during the interrogation. Toward the end of the session Yakir, who was known for his unparalleled bravery and self-control, could not restrain himself. He shouted at his former comrades-in-arms, "Look me in the eyes! Can you really not understand that this is all lies?" Primakov, who was sitting beside him, tried to restrain him, "Give it up, Ion. Don't you see who we are dealing with here?" Yakir asked nonetheless for paper and wrote letters to Stalin and Voroshilov.

Several members of the court became unwell during the proceedings. Shaposhnikov, who tried with his question to give Uborevich a chance to acquit himself, clearly felt uncomfortable. Blucher claimed to be indisposed and left the hall. He was absent for most of the interrogations but returned before sentence was passed.

Budenny, on the other hand, was unrelenting. In the course of the session he sent a report to People's Commissar Voroshilov, in which he called the defendants "all swine" and "enemies" and complained that none had confessed. This report has been preserved.

By two o'clock it was all over. The sentence, which could not be appealed, was the same for all: capital punishment. The convicts were led away to Lubyanka.

Army Commander Yakir was shot that day. The others were shot at dawn on June 12. Their bodies were taken to Khodynka to a place where construction work was going on. In an area cordoned off by soldiers of the Red Army they were dumped into a trench, covered by quicklime, and buried.<sup>6</sup>

A quarter century earlier the field camp of the Aleksandrovsky Cadet Academy, at which Tukhachevsky had studied, was located at Khodynka.

In 1936 Mikhail Tukhachevsky reached the peak of his service career. On April 4 he was appointed First Deputy People's Commissar of Defense and Chief of Combat Preparedness of the RKKA. Events preceding these promotions testify to the steady rise of Tukhachevsky's official position and of his influence. In the summer of 1931 he had become Deputy People's Commissar and Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council, and Chief of Ordinance of the RKKA. On February 21, 1933, he was awarded the Order of Lenin, and on November 7 it was he who reviewed the parade of troops on Red Square—a rare distinction, as that was usually done by the People's Commissar. At the Seventeenth Congress of the Communist Party in 1934 Tukhachevsky delivered a speech and was elected candidate member of the Central Committee. In November 1935, when personal military ranks were reintroduced, Tukhachevsky was among the first five to receive the highest rank, Marshal of the Soviet Union. He traveled to England in February 1936 to attend the funeral of King George V and successfully carried out his mission, which went beyond simply representing the Soviet Union. The forty-year-old marshal and the film he presented on massive airborne landing impressed the English. Even skeptics like General Bell acknowledged they were impressed by Tukhachevsky's pet forces, the airborne troops. On his return trip Tukhachevsky stopped in Paris for talks with General M. G. Gamelin, the chief of the French general staff. Soon after his return he was appointed to another high post, which had been created especially for him.

All was well, it would seem. But behind the scenes, where so much that is important in Russian affairs takes place, things were not so rosy. The problem was that Stalin had never particularly liked Tukhachevsky. During the struggle for power he had forced Tukhachevsky to accept a demotion from his post as chief-of-staff of the RKKA to command the Leningrad Military District. When he had consolidated his power, Stalin permitted Tukhachevsky to return to the central apparatus of the People's Commissariat and even to move higher. We cannot know with



absolute certainty what Stalin's logic or motives may have been; but we can make educated suppositions, which the reader will find in the third part of the book.

In 1931 Tukhachevsky was brought back from his three-year exile in Leningrad. In his new role he quickly became exceptionally and productively active. He initiated, defended, and supported the development of new weapons that later became the basis of the Red Army's strength. The most modern airplanes; the T-34, which turned out to be the best tank in the Second World War; airborne troops; unique research and pioneering work in radar, rocketry, and jet-propelled weaponry, all were among the fruits of this work. We are omitting details because all of this is elaborated in memoirs and other historical literature. What is important for us is that Tukhachevsky worked in this field not because he was enchanted by the technology, but because the technical equipment of the army was a necessary condition for the military doctrine he preached. Tukhachevsky had propounded the theory of deep battle and operations in the early 1920s. Over the following decade the theory had been developed and worked out in detail by a group of his young colleagues. The greatest credit for the final formulation of the doctrine belongs to V. K. Triandafillov and his colleagues in the First (operational) Directorate of the RKKA General Staff, among whom G. S. Isserson stands out.

In just a few years Tukhachevsky had achieved a great deal. At the Seventeenth Party Congress the fiery People's Commissar Voroshilov had proclaimed, "The basic tasks of reconstructing our army have now been accomplished." In 1933 for every Red Army infantryman there were 7.74 horsepower. This figure was higher than that for the French, American, or even the English army, which was the most mechanized of that time. Of course we ought not rely too heavily on statistics from ceremonial speeches. In the same speech Voroshilov, sagaciously looking back sixteen years, spoke in favor of the horse, since at the end of the First World War there had been over a million of them in the French army, about 880,000 in the German, and in the tsarist army 1,142,000!

While Voroshilov was showing off, firing his pistol from the rostrum for effect, Tukhachevsky and colleagues were creating a new army. In two of the most important military districts, the Ukraine and Belorussia, Yakir and Uborevich boldly introduced new principles for training troops and worked out totally new forms of coordination of land and air units. The Ukrainian maneuvers of 1935, and especially of 1936,

provoked unconcealed admiration among foreign military observers and shook up military thinking in all of Europe, setting it off in a new direction. At the same time a strong fortified line was being constructed along the western and southern borders of the USSR.

Whatever other military problems Tukhachevsky may have set his mind to, he always remained principally a strategist. Problems of strategic and operational arts were always his favorite food for thought. In the eyes of western specialists Tukhachevsky was first of all a strategist. His turning maneuver around Warsaw in 1920 was highly regarded, despite the failure of the operation as a whole. Even in 1936, while he was hurriedly preparing the field manual of the RKKA, Tukhachevsky also prepared a new edition of his *New Questions of War*, which had first been published in 1932.<sup>1</sup> That manuscript is apparently buried in the bowels of the NKVD.

According to G. S. Isserson, "in strategic matters Tukhachevsky stood head and shoulders above many representatives of the higher command of the Red Army." But in the mid-1930s he "did not have direct access to the plan for the strategic deployment of our armed forces, which was worked out in the General Staff." The cadres decided everything. That is why at the head of the General Staff Stalin had put Marshal Egorov, whom he knew from the time of the Civil War to be obedient and loyal. Egorov also had a skeleton in his closet, which Stalin might use. Tukhachevsky did not have this merit and therefore could not be admitted.

From the time the fascists came to power Tukhachevsky intently followed developments in Germany. In his work, *Military Plans of Contemporary Germany*,<sup>2</sup> he pointed out that the accelerated militarization of the country seriously imperiled peace on the continent. Time was on Hitler's side. His first aim would be to conquer France, but he also posed a major threat to the USSR. In 1935, with the Wehrmacht's strength grown to 849,000, Tukhachevsky warned that the USSR, with a population two-and-a-half times as large as Germany's, had an army of only 940,000.

Tukhachevsky's strategy was always offensive—"smashing" (*sokrushenie*). Now he had urgently to rethink how he could change his strategy to employ it effectively against an enemy that itself tore into battle. That Hitler would attack he had no doubt. Moreover, the attack would come suddenly. Norbert Wiener once noted that in peacetime it is impossible to determine the fitness of generals for the next war.

Today those who were successful in the most recent war seem good, while those who had successfully led in the previous war are considered obsolete.<sup>3</sup> Tukhachevsky was a very ambitious man, but he did not delude himself about his powers. He did not hope to divine the course—or even the character—of the coming war. Only the opening phases of a war could be predicted, as they were largely determined by the features and factors of peacetime. In his article “The Nature of Border Fighting,” Tukhachevsky repudiated the generally accepted idea of “concentrating massed armies at the borders by railroad” because of the vulnerability of railroads to air attack.<sup>4</sup> For the same reason he had to discard the old schemes of mobilization and concentration of armies.

Not long before, Tukhachevsky had refuted the idea of A. A. Svechin, the outstanding military writer, that it would be advantageous to fight a strategic defense (“exhaustion”—*izmor*). Events in Europe suggest that Svechin was right.

New views require verification. But how can new concepts of warfare be checked out short of going to war? There is a way, however imperfect it might be: war games, or as it is more commonly called now, simulation, reproducing the conditions of war. Toward the end of 1935 Tukhachevsky proposed that the General Staff conduct war games. His idea was accepted, and the games took place in November 1936. They have been mentioned in print only twice. The first article was by G. S. Isserson, whom we have already mentioned, then a brigade commander and actual director of the Operation Directorate of the General Staff, as well as head of the operations faculty of the General Staff Academy. Isserson worked up the assignments for the games. The second article came from the pen of A. I. Todorsky, who in 1936 was superintendent of the Air Force Academy.<sup>5</sup> Corps Commander Todorsky commanded an air group (*aviasoedinenie*) for the “German” side in the games.

The western front of the “Red” forces was commanded by Uborevich, the “German” forces by Tukhachevsky, the “Poles” by Yakir. In setting the conditions of the games the General Staff tried to base them on the current military-political situation in Europe without trying to peer into the future. The German forces were estimated on the basis of the mobilization formula of 3:1, the existence of thirty-six divisions in the Wehrmacht, inexact information about the formation of three tank divisions, and an air force that had at its disposal four to five thousand



planes. (When the real war began, Germany was able to put one hundred divisions under arms and sent fifty to fifty-five against the USSR in the regions where the games were conducted. The Poles contributed another twenty.) The Kremlin strategists had learned their political lessons well and understood that the capitalists, imperialists, and fascists were one gang. If they weren't for us, they must be against us. The Poles therefore had no choice but to cooperate with the Germans and to attack the USSR together.<sup>6</sup>

Even an intelligent and subtle writer like Isserson defended this prognosis eighteen years after the Second World War, when he wrote, "In 1936 there was no reason to suppose that Germany would first swallow Poland whole and end her existence as an independent country. This deprived Germany of the support of a well-organized and trained army that could mobilize more than fifty divisions."<sup>7</sup> Of course the General Staff could not know as they planned the war games that the deal between Hitler and Stalin would lead to the division of Poland. They should have noted, however, that the organization of the Polish army was outdated and their arms obsolescent.

Tukhachevsky objected most of all to the accepted disposition of forces for the simulated exercises. If Germany could put ninety-two divisions in the field at the beginning of the First World War, now they could count on two hundred; otherwise the once-beaten Germans would not start a fight. Therefore, Tukhachevsky insisted there would be at least eighty German divisions to the north of the Poles. He apparently did not think much of the Poles. In actuality, in 1941, plan "Barbarossa" threw seventy-nine German divisions against the Soviet Union in the "Center" and "Northern" groups. Altogether on the Eastern Front they had 152 divisions.

Tukhachevsky further insisted that the grouping of German forces between the Narev River and the mouth of the Neman was only a preliminary concentration after crossing over by railroad. He demanded to be permitted, before the operational part of the games began, to deploy his "German" forces to prevent the concentration of the "Reds." He also demanded that he be permitted to strike first. Tukhachevsky believed that German propaganda about the blitzkrieg was not empty boasting. Germany did not have the resources to conduct a long war. Tukhachevsky took seriously the factor of surprise.

Tukhachevsky's thoughts on the course of the early part of the war, as conducted in the games, are also known, although the memoirists

don't write about them. Because of the unexpectedness of their attack, the Germans would enjoy tremendous success in the first months, moving 100 to 250 kilometers into Soviet territory. The "Reds" would not be able to carry out a full mobilization of the Army or to replace the losses of this initial period. For eight to twelve months they would be forced to fight defensive battles before going over to a decisive counter-attack. Tukhachevsky did not expect that in real conditions an attack could come entirely as a surprise. Intelligence and reconnaissance would insure against that. Stalin fully disproved that theory in 1941.

The conditions proposed for the games were exceptionally difficult. They were not derived directly from contemporary assessments of the enemy's strength, but for educational purposes they were justified. As we know, reality was much crueler.

Marshal A. I. Egorov, who by nature was more a clerk than a military commander, was in charge of the games. He had always been a compliant executor of orders from above. In 1905 he dispersed a demonstration in Tbilisi; during the Civil War he obediently followed the ignorant command of Stalin, who was then a member of the Military Revolutionary Council of the front; finally on June 11, 1937, also on orders from Stalin, he maintained order at the trial of his comrades. Above all Egorov wanted to display the work of his office in the best light, in this case to show that the plans developed by the General Staff for deployment in case of war were the best plans, the correct and only possible plans. Therefore, with full assurance that the Master would be on his side, he discarded Tukhachevsky's sagacious suggestions. Egorov did not want to adopt the methods of Suvorov, who, it had been established, had operated on a "feudal" basis. Nor did he wish to burden himself by learning anything new. The enemy's troops received no strategic advantages: they would have to approach the border after the main Soviet troops had been deployed. Isserson wrote:

In the final analysis what happened was that the two sides began the games evenly matched. The main forces of the Red side were deployed along the border. The possibility that we might be able to prevent the concentration of the enemy's forces or that we might strike the first blow were not considered. The factor of surprise and suddenness, to which the Germans attached such great importance and which in their open discussions in the press comprised the main feature of their strategic doctrine, found no expression in



the games. In these circumstances, which deprived the games of fundamental strategic meaning, the course of events led to a frontal clash like the border engagements of 1914 and ended with no decisive outcome.<sup>8</sup>

The circle tightened. The Red Army was ordered to fight according to plans that were twenty-five years old and tragically useless. Todorsky's description of the games agrees completely with Isserson's. A few important details, which have not been previously published, complete the picture.

Before the games began, Tukhachevsky traveled in the border districts to update his information on the German forces. At the same time the games' other participants gathered in Moscow: all of the commanders of military districts, chiefs of district headquarters or their assistants, corps commanders, many division commanders. A day before "hostilities" commenced, they met in house number 2 of the People's Commissariat of Defense at the intersection of Kuibyshev Street (formerly Ilinka) and Red Square. That evening an important message came: the games were being transferred to the Kremlin. Members of the Politburo wanted to participate in them. The next morning all except Tukhachevsky were in the Kremlin. For several hours they waited. When Stalin arrived, he asked what had caused the delay. He was told that because Tukhachevsky was absent, they did not have complete information on the "blue" side, the enemy. Stalin very reasonably noted that we had a General Staff who could supply the missing information. Egorov and his colleagues worked all night. When the participants gathered again the next morning, Egorov announced his findings.

Germany and Poland would declare their mobilization of ninety and twenty divisions, respectively, and take the offensive. Nor would we be caught napping. We would immediately put sixty mobilized divisions on the border, and within two weeks another forty. A little after that we would advance twenty to twenty-five more from interior districts. The aggressor would attempt to break through our lines of defense for two or three weeks but would have no success. The Red Army would launch a crushing counteroffensive and carry the war into Poland. Revolts would break out against the fascist regimes in Germany and Poland. It was all like in a song or a report: if tomorrow we're at war, if tomorrow we're on the march . . . with a little blood in a foreign

land. . . . Stalin nodded approvingly. The commanders received their assignments and set to work with their staffs.

Tukhachevsky finally showed up. All the participants were rounded up again. Stalin asked Tukhachevsky to familiarize himself with Egorov's arrangements and to express his opinion of them. Tukhachevsky replied that his information was different from Egorov's. Germany would mobilize 150 to 200 divisions and would attack the Soviet Union without declaring war. Because of the suddenness of the attack and the numerical superiority of the enemy, we would have to fight a long defensive war on our own territory before we could possibly go over to a counteroffensive.

Stalin reacted curtly, "What are you trying to do, frighten Soviet authority?" The games were conducted according to Egorov's plan.

"Tukhachevsky was clearly disenchanted," wrote Isserson<sup>9</sup> with magnificent understatement. Tukhachevsky understood—he could not help but understand—that on the eve of unavoidable world carnage the defense of the country, its fate, lay in the hands of vain, shortsighted, and ignorant men. We will begin by taking a giant step backward in an attempt to find the causes of the catastrophe that struck the Red Army. The Civil War stamped an ineradicable mark on the future development of the new Army. In this unusual war, a fratricidal war in which the enemies were not foreign invaders but countrymen, the RKKA was not only born but came of age. It was then that the traditions, the doctrines, and the relationship between the young Army and the new political authority took root.

From this eventful period we will take just a few incidents. They have been selected for the light they shed on the personalities of the men who later played decisive roles in shaping the Army. We will also touch on negative aspects that have heretofore been deliberately ignored or distorted. By this we do not mean to dishonor the Red Army or add glory to its enemies. Who will take it upon himself to be a judge in the tragic internecine war? If we must say something not entirely praiseworthy about some of the leaders of the Red Army, that is not our fault. For too long official Soviet historiography has lied or simply been silent about this. More than enough has already been written about the deeds of their opponents.



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## The Civil War: A Few Pages

Brothers, let us celebrate liberty's twilight . . .

—Mandelstam





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## 3 1918: The Birth of the RKKA

The decree establishing the volunteer Workers-Peasants' Red Army was signed by Lenin on January 28, 1918. Four months passed before regular units were formed. Beginning in 1922, however, the anniversary of the creation of the Red Army was marked on February 23.

The history of how this date came to be chosen deserves a moment's notice. For a long while, the official version explained that on that day the young Red units received their baptism of fire by stopping the attacking German troops near Narva and Pskov. In the mid-1960s this version was refuted in the press; since then February 23 has been marked as the day of national opposition to the enemy, and the pre-1938 explanation has once again been adopted.

Let us briefly explore the events of that period. On February 10, 1918, negotiations at Brest-Litovsk were broken off. The situation for the young republic was desperate. Soviet authorities could do nothing but wait for the German reaction, and on the eighteenth the Germans attacked. Because they did not commit many troops to the offensive, and most of these were militia (*Landwehr*), the offensive developed slowly. The units of the old Russian army that still occupied the front did not put up an active defense and were easily driven eastward. The Red Army did not really exist yet. On February 18 the Central Committee of the Communist Party met and after two stormy sessions accepted Lenin's ultimatum on the immediate conclusion of peace on any terms. The Germans were informed.

While the Germans continued their attack and Soviet authorities sued for peace, the formation of Red Guard militia detachments continued. On February 21 Lenin appealed to everyone capable of bearing arms with the slogan, "The Fatherland is in peril." For the next ten days the factory sirens and whistles of Petrograd sounded the alarm. Practically all the men of the city took up arms. Together with the militia units that had already been formed—the soldiers of the Petrograd garrison and the sailors of the Baltic fleet—they marched off to meet the Germans. They could not, however, mount effective resistance.

The German command, whose major concerns were now in the West, were not seeking to reopen a war with Russia. They hoped only for some easy loot. On the evening of February 22, the Germans occupied Pskov. All was then quiet from the twenty-third through the twenty-seventh. During the next week a few minor clashes occurred, and on March 3, P. E. Dybenko surrendered Narva. That same month he was tried by a military tribunal and removed from his post as People's Commissar for Naval Affairs.

In February 1919 a group of women workers from Petrograd wrote to Lenin to suggest commemorating those memorable ten days with a holiday in honor of the "birth of the Red Army." Lenin agreed although he did not evince any particular enthusiasm. In view of the difficult circumstances in which the country still found itself, the holiday was fixed on a Sunday, which that year happened to fall on the twenty-third. So, the choice of the date was to a large extent accidental.

The holiday was not marked in 1920 or 1921. Perhaps little importance was yet attached to it. In 1922 it was entered in the official calendar of saints. It seemed more appropriate to celebrate this rather accidentally born holiday after the victory in the Civil War.

One way or another a Red Army Day was necessary. Ideology, however, would not permit that it be celebrated as an anniversary of any, even the most glorious, victory in the internecine war. The Red Army had to have been born in battle with an external enemy. Starting from this ideological basis, the Entente was declared the chief enemy, and Kolchak, Denikin, Yudenich, and Wrangel its agents. Somewhat later, Stalinist historiography took that thesis to its logical extreme: the entire Civil War was turned into a repulsing of foreign aggression in the form of three separate campaigns of the Entente. In this way the war lost its internecine character and became a defensive struggle; but the common name—the Civil War—was retained, possibly through inadvertence. That is why the holiday was kept on February 23. At the dawn of Soviet power there was no other episode associated with the attack of a foreign enemy.

In World War II the story of the holiday was improved. The story about the defeat of German aggressors near Pskov and Narva surfaced in 1938, and in 1942 Stalin spoke of "the destruction of elite German corps and divisions." It was not mentioned, of course, that on February 23 Pskov was already in German hands or that the Germans were still

three hundred kilometers from Narva. It is more interesting that Stalin never tried to attach Red Army Day to his own participation in the Civil War, for example with the defense of Tsaritsyn.

The Red Army was born. The circumstances surrounding the registration of the birth did not foretell an easy fate.

Stalin made his first appearance on the Civil War battlefields in the spring of 1918. In May near Tsaritsyn, when echelons of the retreating 5th Ukrainian Army under Vovoshilov were crossing the Don, Stalin arrived as an extraordinary commissar of supply for South Russia. Later, obliging historians transformed the Tsaritsyn sector into the decisive front of the Civil War and proclaimed Stalin the chief organizer of the Red Army. At the time even Stalin did not know his destiny. He wrote Lenin on July 7, 1918, "I am driving and berating everyone who needs it. I hope we will soon reestablish [rail communication with the center]. You may be assured that we will spare no one, not ourselves, not others, but somehow we will supply the grain."

At Tsaritsyn Stalin joined the staff of the Military Revolutionary Council of the North Caucasus Military District. Using his high position as a member of the government (he was still People's Commissar for Nationality Affairs), he immediately began to interfere in purely military matters, which, because of ignorance and inexperience, he did not understand. Stalin himself, of course, thought differently. From that same note to Lenin: "If our military 'specialists' (cobblers!) weren't sleeping or doing nothing, the [railroad] line would not have been cut. If the line is reestablished, it won't be because of the specialists, but despite them."<sup>1</sup> It is immediately apparent that Stalin, himself the son of a real cobbler, had no use for military specialists, or that in any case he meant to put himself above them.

On May 2 Andrei Evgenevich Snesev, an ex-lieutenant general of the tsarist army, who had joined the Red Army voluntarily, was appointed commander of the North Caucasus Military District. Snesev was an experienced commander and an outstanding Orientalist. At the end of May he arrived at Tsaritsyn with a mandate from the Council of People's Commissars, signed by Lenin. In a region where partisan operations, and Soviet and Party work were all poorly organized, according to a report by Commissar K. Ia. Zedin,<sup>2</sup> Snesev was to undertake the establishment of regular military units.



Snesarev stepped on a lot of toes. Most important, he clashed with a group of Party workers, headed by K. E. Voroshilov and S. K. Minin, who did not understand the need for a regular army. Free-spirited guerrilla units, meetings, and the free election of commanders seemed to them the only true methods of revolutionary struggle. The establishment of military discipline looked like a return to "tsarist" ways. The commanders of the numerous partisan detachments held the same view. The leaders of small units of two hundred or so men, who liked to call themselves commanders or commanders-in-chief, were mostly soldiers and noncommissioned officers of the old army. They were jealous of the almost unlimited power they had gained over other men, and intuitively they felt that in a regular army they would not retain their command positions. Leaders in a regular army would have to be literate and to have at least an elementary military education, which many of them lacked. History would show that these fears were exaggerated. Old Bolsheviks like Voroshilov and Minin, who had fallen into military work, thought little about careers and felt a class distrust of former tsarist officers.

Stalin momentarily considered the circumstances and supported the partisans. Like a true revolutionary he earned his popularity with the masses. Moreover, he was always repelled by men like Snesarev who stood on a higher intellectual level.

Under these conditions the constructive work of Snesarev and his staff went slowly. When General Krasnov's Cossack units attacked Tsaritsyn, it required a tremendous effort by Snesarev's units to drive them off and to reestablish communication with the center. Then, in the middle of July, Stalin—with the help of Voroshilov and Minin—arrested almost all of Snesarev's staff officers and incarcerated them on a prison ship. Soon Snesarev was also put under guard on an unfounded charge of sabotage that the local Cheka did not confirm. But already in 1918 Stalin realized that actual guilt was not the most important element. It was necessary to declare enemies those who had to be removed for other reasons.

The repression affected not only staff officers. This is how Voroshilov reported that Stalin reacted to the news that a monarchistic organization had been discovered: "Stalin's resolution was terse, 'Shoot.' Engineer Alekseev, two of his sons, and together with them a considerable number of officers, some of whom belonged to the organization, and some of whom were only suspected of sympathy with it, were seized



by the Cheka and immediately, without a trial, shot.”<sup>3</sup> Voroshilov took this quotation from the journal *Don Wave*. We might not have believed a White Guard organ, but Voroshilov used this very piece to describe Stalin’s style of revolutionary work.

Moscow did not believe Stalin’s accusations and sent a commission from the Supreme Military Inspectorate to investigate. It was headed by A. I. Okulov. When he learned they were coming, Stalin gave the order to kill the arrested officers. The barge was towed to a deep channel in the Volga and sunk. Several days later Okulov and his commission arrived and quickly established that the charges against Snesev were groundless. He was freed and transferred to a different front. The drowned officers were written off as losses in the Civil War. As was normal for those times, no one was brought to account for the “mistake.”

Strategically Stalin’s activity also bore fruit. In the spring of 1918 the Soviets faced two main enemies in the south: the Don Cossacks, and the voluntary officer detachments of Generals L. G. Kornilov and M. A. Alekseev, both of which had retreated into the Caucasus.

The Cossacks were tired of war and did not wish to fight with anyone, including the Soviets. They reacted unenthusiastically in April when the newly elected ataman Krasnov proclaimed an independent Don state in which he included not only the traditional Cossack territories but also the Taganrog, Tsaritsyn, and Voronezh districts. Krasnov himself recorded that the Cossacks were not up to fighting for new land.<sup>4</sup> But the Bolsheviks’ grain-requisitioning policies, put into effect in the spring of 1918, forced the Cossacks to take up arms.

The Volunteers turned out to be natural allies of the Cossacks. Kornilov and Alekseev planned to lead their officers out of Russia through the Caucasus to save them for a future army. However, the Volunteers, like Krasnov’s troops, were very weak. In May Krasnov had 17,000 fighters, many of whom were not reliable, and twenty-one guns. He was opposed by much larger Red forces: the Southern Screen (*Zavesa*) with 19,820 infantry and cavalry and 38 guns, and the 10th Army with 39,465 infantry and cavalry and 240 guns. The Volunteer forces had numbered only 3,500 in February, almost one hundred of them sick or wounded. They rested until March in the southern *stanitsas* (large Cossack villages) under the protection of the Cossacks. To carry out their plan they had to cross the Kuban peninsula, where their way was blocked by significant Red Forces: Kalnin’s group with 30,000,

the Taman Army with another 30,000, and the 11th Army with 80,000 to 100,000. The Red Army's superiority was overwhelming. All of these troupes were subordinate to the North Caucasus Military District, whose headquarters had been moved from Rostov to Tsaritsyn because of the Cossack threat.

In April the Volunteers made a desperate attempt to break out. On April 13, during the storming of Ekaterinodar, General Kornilov perished. The Whites under General Denikin retreated to the Don. It seemed that the Reds could very quickly defeat the enemy. They were hindered, however, by the absence of full authority in the hands of the district commander and by the super-revolutionary activity of the district Revolutionary Military Council headed by the recently arrived Stalin. We have already described his actions; it remains to explain the results.

While Stalin and his comrades were battling the headquarters staff of their army, Krasnov and Denikin were gathering forces. Although relations between them were tense and there was a struggle for supreme command, nonetheless in the summer of 1918 the enemies of the Soviet government achieved considerable success. By August Krasnov's army consisted of 40,000 reliable soldiers, and his authority stretched across the whole Don Cossack Territory. In May the Volunteer Army, still made up of officer units, included 5,000 infantry and cavalry. Denikin destroyed Kalnin's group, occupied the villages of Torgovaia and Velikokniazheskaia in June, and took Tikhoretskaia on July 13. The strategic position of the Soviet forces in the North Caucasus became critical. Now the Volunteer Army represented a more serious threat. It had 20,000 fighters and was continually attracting more officers, mainly from the south.

The successes of the Don and Volunteer armies occurred during Stalin's usurpation of military leadership in Tsaritsyn and to a significant extent because of it. Stalin commanded the North Caucasus Military District on his own for two months after Snegarev's removal in the middle of July. It was during this period that Denikin began his successful offensive and his army suddenly began to grow. He seized Ekaterinodar on August 16. By the end of September there were 40,000 soldiers under the White flag.

Having freed himself of Snegarev, Stalin arbitrarily altered the plans for the defense of Tsaritsyn. By autumn these changes seriously endangered the city and almost destroyed the cooperation of Red forces in the

south. Stalin clashed again with the military leadership, this time with former General P. P. Sytin, who had been appointed commander of the Southern Front.

This was a difficult time for the Soviet republic. Lenin lay wounded in his apartment in the Kremlin while Sverdlov and Tsiurupa directed the government. On September 2 a new military organ was created, the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, with L. D. Trotsky at its head. I. I. Vatsetis was appointed Commander-in-Chief. Merciless Red terror was proclaimed throughout the country; defensive measures took on new forms; new fronts and armies were established. The Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars confirmed appointments, but it was the Revolutionary Council that ordered the appointment of front commanders. Sytin was made commander of the Southern Front, which had been formed from the old North Caucasus Military District; but Stalin did not obey Moscow's directive. He sabotaged the order to move the administration of the front to Kozlov, and then by an order of the Revolutionary Military Council of the front he dismissed Sytin as a former tsarist general and replaced him with Voroshilov. Most likely it was not Sytin's past that disturbed Stalin but the power he exercised as troop commander. Stalin always took questions of power seriously. Conditions near Tsaritsyn and throughout the Northern Caucasus became so perilous at this time that Moscow finally had to intervene. On October 6, Sverdlov and Stalin exchanged angry telegrams, after which the Central Committee recalled Stalin from the Southern Front and reorganized the Revolutionary Military Council. Voroshilov and Minin were removed, replaced by K. A. Mekhonoshin, B. V. Legran, and P. E. Lazimir.

The new front command set about to clean up the mess Stalin had made. When the Cossacks approached Kamyshevskaya, the Soviet command transferred some of its forces from the Eastern Front to save Tsaritsyn. Sytin successfully defended Tsaritsyn; but he was not able to save anything in the Northern Caucasus, where the front collapsed. Inspired by the example of the Revolutionary Military Council, lower-ranking commanders began to behave in the same independent fashion. Matveev, Commander of the Taman Army, refused to subordinate himself to the orders of the Kuban-Black Sea Central Executive Committee and was therefore shot by the local Commander-in-Chief Sorokin. In his turn, Sorokin sabotaged the formation of regular units of the 11th Army and arrested and shot members of the Kuban-

Black Sea government. Declared an outlaw, he fled but was captured by one of Matveev's comrades, who avenged his commander. Brigade Commander Kochubei, surrounded by Denikin's troops, went over to the enemy with part of his forces. He was, however, hanged on the orders of General Lukomsky.

The whole Northern Caucasus fell into the hands of the Volunteer Army, and Denikin became an enemy to be reckoned with for another two years.



However important were the events at Tsaritsyn, in the spring of 1918 the main front for the Soviet republic was in the East. It continued to be so until the summer of 1919 when Kolchak was decisively defeated in the battle for the Urals. Nonetheless, until recently the importance of this front has been intentionally depreciated, because Stalin, Voroshilov, and other comrades-in-arms of the Great Leader participated very little or not at all on the Eastern Front. According to the official historiographical concept of the war, Stalin was always sent to the decisive sectors of the Civil War.

Now, however reluctantly, the truth has been reestablished. The primacy of the Eastern Front is recognized even by writers who in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s made their scholarly reputations by praising the activity of Stalin in the fateful Tsaritsyn sector.

It is not enough to say that for a year and a half the question of the existence of Soviet power was being decided in the East. The Eastern Front, besides, was the furnace in which the RKKA was forged. The first regular units were created there; the leadership qualities of many, if not most, of the leaders of the Red Army were first displayed there. Here is a list, far from complete, of commanders who gained their experience in the East: both Commanders-in-Chief during the Civil War, I. I. Vatsetis and S. S. Kamenev; Front Commander, and later People's Commissar for Navy and Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR, M. V. Frunze; Front Commanders M. N. Tukhachevsky, N. D. Kashirin, M. M. Lashevich, S. A. Mezheninov, I. P. Uborevich, R. P. Eideman; prominent political workers L. N. Aronshtam, A. S. Bulin, I. M. Vareikis, V. V. Kuibyshev, I. N. Smirnov; commanders of lesser ranks who later occupied higher posts, I. P. Belov, M. D. Velikanov, N. V. Kuibyshev, K. K. Rokossovsky, V. D. Sokolovsky, V. I. Chuikov; and legendary divisional commanders V. M. Azin and V. I. Chapayev.

The troops from the Eastern Front, who were thrown into the southern and western sectors after the defeat of Kolchak, turned the tide of



battle there also. The leaders of the Eastern Front played important roles in the victory in the Civil War. Practically none of them survived the repression of 1937–38.

The Eastern Front was opened in May 1918 as a result of the mutiny of the 50,000 men of the Czechoslovak Legion. Under the protection of the Czechoslovaks, White governments were established in the East with their center at Omsk. By August the Omsk government had at its disposal 40,000 to 50,000 troops. These units were only being formed and brought up to strength, however. The front was held by 40,000 Czechoslovaks. Another 12,000 Czechoslovaks had gone over to the Reds at the time of the mutiny. The Red Army under Vatsetis comprised 80,000 to 90,000 men. Moscow had by that time recognized its mistake in underestimating the danger in the East. At first the Czech Legion dominated the whole Volga region. At Kazan the gold reserves of Russia fell into their hands. In the middle of August the Soviet forces went on the offensive and crushed the White Czechs; they took Kazan, Simbirsk, and Samara. The Czechs quit the fight and began their long retreat to the Far East. The Russian White Guards under General V. G. Boldyrev retreated into the Orenburg steppe.

It was clear to Boldyrev that his only salvation lay in a breakthrough toward Perm and Kotlas so that he could link up with the government of Chaikovsky and Miller and the Anglo-American troops in the north. Only in that way could the White Guards find the arms and other military supplies they needed. On December 25 the Whites seized Perm. By itself this event does not stand out among the many similar episodes of the Civil War, but official historians have inflated its importance because the Central Committee sent a commission composed of Stalin and Dzerzhinsky to investigate its fall. The sonorous term “the Perm catastrophe” was invented to lend importance to Stalin’s acts.

Reality was more prosaic. The 3rd Army defending Perm surrendered the city because they did not have enough men to hold it. The Army commanders who replaced one another there—M. M. Lashevich, P. I. Berzin, S. A. Mezheninov—repeatedly asked for reinforcements, which they did not receive.

At that time the surrender of any city without the order of central authority was investigated by a special commission, and the guilty parties were turned over to a military tribunal. After the surrender of Narva, Dybenko was tried in this way; after the fall of Kharkov, Voroshilov. The commission investigating the surrender of Perm

affirmed the conclusions of the 3rd Army command. No one was tried. The Army sent reinforcements and the enemy offensive was halted. That was basically all that happened. The appearance of Stalin on the Eastern Front is significant in that it was the only occasion in the history of the Civil War in which he appeared in a theater of military operations without causing harm to the Red Army.

The major events of the Eastern Front occurred two months after Stalin's departure in the battle with Kolchak. Vice-Admiral Aleksandr Vasilevich Kolchak, former commander of the Black Sea Fleet, was one of the most able and best-educated officers of the Russian Navy. After graduating from the Naval Academy (*Morskoi korpus*) he served several years in the Navy; then, as a hydrologist and oceanographer, he participated in several northern and far eastern expeditions sponsored by the Academy of Sciences. Kolchak was a first-rate scientist, who at one time had worked with F. Nansen.

After fleeing from Sevastopol and traveling most of the way around the world, Kolchak wound up in Omsk as Minister of War of the White government. On November 18, 1918, he carried out a coup and proclaimed himself Supreme Commander-in-Chief and Supreme Ruler of Russia. His army represented a serious threat to the Soviets, for a while a mortal danger. The Red Army was still quite small and recruitment was difficult. The policy of requisitioning grain from the peasants had caused a large part of the peasantry to reject Soviet authority. Many of them fled to areas held by Kolchak, but his government strove to resurrect the landlords' power, especially along the Volga. The peasants, who had seized the landlords' land, were punished with terrible cruelty. There were mass executions and whippings.

Lenin, on the other hand, having assessed the extent of the danger, changed his tactics toward the peasants. The committees of poor peasants were disbanded, and the seizure of grain was halted until spring. As a result, Kolchak lost his major source of recruits and the Red Army gained them.

At its largest, Kolchak's army had 150,000 cavalry and infantry, while the Red Army grew to almost 200,000 and continued to grow. In Siberia, in the Whites' rear, a peasant partisan movement also grew in numbers. The fate of Kolchak's army was decided.

The First Horse Army is sacrosanct in Soviet military history. So far as the average Soviet citizen knows, the First Horse was the Red Army of the time of the Civil War, the unconquerable force that defended the workers-peasants' republic from the assaults of fourteen enemy powers, from Denikin, Kolchak, Yudenich, and Shkuro. On the Red side in the Civil War there were seventeen field and two cavalry armies with a total enlistment of about 5 million men, but in popular memory only the 30,000-strong Horse Army has been preserved. Many books have been written about it, and songs have been composed in its honor. Its heroic battles have served as the theme for movies, plays, paintings, and monumental sculpture.

In the 1920s and 1930s cavalrymen dominated the leadership of the country's armed forces. In the fifty-eight years from 1918 to 1976 the country has had, under various titles, ten ministers of war. The three who had served in the Horse Army guided the defense of the country for twenty-five years. These were K. E. Voroshilov, 1925–40; S. K. Timoshenko, 1940–41; and A. A. Grechko, 1967–76. In the nineteen-year interval between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the Fatherland War, it was only during the first three years that cavalrymen did not run the Red Army.

Service in the First Horse served as a pass to higher command responsibilities. The dictatorship of the cavalry, which is unique among the great powers of the twentieth century, was possible only because of the dictatorship of the country by the patron of the First Horse, Stalin, and because of the control of the armed forces by its political mentor Voroshilov. As Caligula had brought his horse into the senate, these two horse lovers packed the Army's command with cavalrymen. S. M. Budenny, G. I. Kulik, E. A. Shchadenko, A. A. Grechko, and K. S. Moskalenko were all deputy ministers or deputy people's commissars of defense. K. A. Meretskov was chief of the General Staff. When individual ranks were reintroduced in 1935, two of the five first marshals were cavalrymen; a third, Egorov, commanded the front on which

the First Horse was created. It ought to be noted that neither of the two commanders-in-chief of the Army during the Civil War became marshals, nor did Yakir or Uborevich. Altogether eight marshals of the Soviet Union, nine generals of the Army and marshals of branches of the service, and a large number of other generals came from Budenny's First Horse.

Before the Second World War Budenny's men played an exceptional role in the Red Army. They are largely responsible for the catastrophe of 1937–38 and for the defeat in the first years of the war. Only when combat actually began was the unfitness of Voroshilov, Budenny, Timoshenko, Shchadenko, Tiulenev, Apanasenko, and Kulik revealed. Kulik was twice demoted for shameful behavior at the front; having begun as a marshal he became a major. Stalin would not, however, permit one of his chief advisors from before the war to be professionally destroyed; Kulik died a major general. In the mid-1960s he was posthumously returned the marshal's baton. To be fair, we ought also to note that several cavalymen, who were little known before the war, showed themselves to be capable military leaders and achieved high rank on the field of combat; these included Eremenko, Rybalko, Katukov, and others.

All of this suggests we ought to look carefully at the First Horse Army. We do not intend to write its whole history but will try to reestablish the truth about a few incidents.

In Soviet literature it is considered unarguable that the First Horse Army was the first large unit (*ob'edinenie*) of strategic cavalry in the modern history of war. The matter is not so simple. It is true that horse armies did not exist previously. However, the idea of forming a strategic cavalry to carry out independent tasks separate from the main forces and deep in the rear of the enemy belongs to Anton Ivanovich Denikin. Not only did he introduce this bold idea, but in August 1919 he joined together two cavalry corps to form a larger unit. Later the cavalry corps under Shkuro was linked to this group, which was commanded by General Mamontov. This gave Denikin a strategic cavalry group equal in size to an army. Mamontov's group broke through the Red Army's Southern Front and for a month successfully operated in its rear, taking Tambov, Kozlov, and Voronezh. The Soviet counteroffensive was broken. Mamontov's successes permitted General Mai-Maevsky to move his army far to the north, where they took Kursk and Orel and directly threatened Tula with its arms factories and Moscow itself.



In the third volume of the *History of the Civil War* we read, “the importance of massed cavalry in the conditions of the civil war were correctly learned by the Red commanders from the example of Mamontov’s raid. That raid made up their minds about the creation of massed cavalry in the Red Army. . . .”<sup>1</sup> This testimony about the priority of Denikin is all the more valuable because it comes from the highest leadership of the Red Army of that period. The editors of that volume were S. S. Kamenev, Bubnov, Tukhachevsky, and Eideman. Later Soviet historians tried to forget that admission.

The second and extremely complex question is, where did the First Army come from? For a long while we have been told that it arose from the cavalry corps of Budenny, which in turn had grown out of his 4th Cavalry Division. In the 1960s the screen of lies was temporarily lifted by the efforts of several honest historians, including T. A. Illeritskaia and V. D. Polikarpov. This called forth an extraordinarily sharp reaction from the Budenny camp, and further research was halted.

What caused the stormy anger of these aging but influential men? The commandant of the Frunze Military Academy, Army General A. T. Stuchenko, for example, turned up with his cavalry sword at the editorial office of *Nedelia*, the journal that had printed Polikarpov’s article. They were disturbed, even insulted, by the attempt to reestablish the true circumstances of the demise of B. M. Dumenko, one of the participants of the Civil War. From the facts of his biography, which are presented below, it will become clear that the veterans were upset unnecessarily.

Don Cossack Boris Mokeevich Dumenko formed a cavalry detachment of the insurgents of Salsky and other districts in 1918. In July the detachment became the 1st Peasants’ Socialist Punitive Cavalry Regiment. Dumenko commanded the regiment and Budenny soon became his assistant. Under Dumenko’s leadership the regiment developed first into a cavalry brigade, then into a division, the same 4th Petrograd Cavalry Division from which the Budenny men say the First Horse was taken. Dumenko commanded the division until May 1919 and during that time was awarded an Order of the Red Banner. Then in connection with the organization of larger cavalry formations he was appointed head of the cavalry of the 10th Army. He had under him the 4th Cavalry Division, commanded by Budenny, and the 6th Cavalry Division under I. P. Apanasenko. Not long after, Dumenko was seriously wounded and put out of action until the fall. While he was



recuperating, the First Horse Corps was formed from the 4th and 6th Divisions. Upon his return to duty Dumenko was made commander of the Combined Horse Corps, which was being formed. In January 1920 Dumenko's corps defeated Denikin's cavalry at Novocherkassk, making it easier for the First Horse and the 8th Army to take Rostov.

In February Dumenko was visited by two of Budenny's men: Divisional Commander S. K. Timoshenko, who had been temporarily suspended for drunkenness, and B. S. Gorbachev, commander of the Special Cavalry Brigade (the Horse Army's). They came to arrest Dumenko; but as they would not be able to do so in the presence of his men, they had to devise another plan. They persuaded Dumenko to have a drink. Since he had had part of his stomach surgically removed, he quickly became drunk. The plan worked. Timoshenko went under the table first, but Dumenko soon followed him. Gorbachev rolled Dumenko in a carpet and dragged him to his cart; then he lugged out the future marshal and people's commissar.

They delivered Dumenko to the headquarters of the First Horse, and from there took him and three of his subordinates to Rostov, where they were tried by a tribunal. The four were accused of organizing the murder of Mikeladze, a commissar of the Combined Horse Corps, who had died under mysterious circumstances. Although the tribunal had no evidence, Dumenko and his comrades were shot. More than forty years later, Deputy General Procurator of the USSR Blinov studied the materials of the case and had to ask, "If this is law, what then is scandalous illegality?"

Dumenko's name was erased from the History of the Red Army and Budenny attributed Dumenko's honors to himself. In 1920 Dumenko represented a serious threat to Budenny's claim to be the Red Army's leading cavalryman. There is reason to believe that Budenny and Voroshilov planned Dumenko's removal. The circumstances surrounding Dumenko's arrest support this supposition, as does the presence on the tribunal of E. A. Shchadenko, a First Horseman. The long-lasting malevolence toward Dumenko and Budenny's behavior toward another of his rivals, F. K. Mironov, about which we will have more to say, also lend credence to this supposition. It is worth noting as well that the commanders of the First Horse frequently proposed subordinating Dumenko's corps to themselves.

After Uborevich's group defeated the Volunteer Army at Orel, Budenny's unit became the trump card in the hand of the Red command.

In October 1919 his horse corps, reinforced by a cavalry division and an infantry brigade, dealt the fatal blow to the Whites' strategic cavalry in the Voronezh–Kastornaia operation. Budenny now had in effect a horse army under his command; it was formally constituted the First Horse in November. The result was seen not only in the defeat of Mamontov's group, which never recovered, but also in the colossal boost it gave to Red Army morale. From then on Denikin's rear remained constantly in danger.

The White front broke all along its length, and the Soviet Command hastened to pursue its strategic advantage. In January 1920 the First Horse took Rostov with a lightning-quick strike. The 8th Army secured the cavalry's success. As Denikin's troops retreated, they formed a line of defense on the left bank of the Don with a key position at Bataisk. The Reds' strategy, which the First Horse helped carry out, was devised by the command of the Caucasus Front under V. I. Shorin; they were to surround or seize Bataisk to prevent the main White force from reaching Novorossiisk. In that way they would prevent Denikin from crossing over to the Crimea where he could organize a new front.

History has shown that Shorin properly appraised the situation. Denikin had planned to retreat to the Crimea through Novorossiisk if he were unable to hold his position on the Don. But the Reds failed to break through the White front immediately. The First Horse and the 8th Army tried several times to take Bataisk, but they failed. The delay in the Red Army's offensive eventually proved costly. Denikin took advantage of it and crossed over to the Crimea with 40,000 men.

The "Bataisk Bottleneck" gave rise to very bitter arguments in the Red camp. Shorin accused Budenny and the commander of the 8th Army, G. Ia. Sokolnikov, of failing to take decisive action. Budenny complained about "the terrain that is entirely unsuitable for cavalry." Sokolnikov reproved the Horse Army for its display of "extraordinarily little combat hardiness." Without going into the details of the argument, let us note that it was at Bataisk that the inability of strategic cavalry to overcome solidly prepared defenses was first discovered. Undoubtedly the unfavorable conditions of the terrain also played a role: the water barrier of the Don and the swampiness of the left bank hampered the cavalry. But we cannot exclude the psychological factor. It was extremely difficult for Voroshilov and Budenny to drag their horsemen from the warmth and comfort of Rostov in the middle of winter.

In the spring of 1920 the First Horse was transferred in march

formation from the Caucasus to the Polish Front. On May 18 they arrived at Elizavetgrad. The Poles had just taken Kiev and were going on the defensive all along the front. Putting the Horse Army into action turned things in the Soviets' favor. On June 5 they broke through the enemy front at the village of Ozernaia and with all four divisions advanced to the Polish rear. It was a huge operational success and the culmination of the First Horse's fighting. It posed the threat of complete encirclement and destruction to the 3rd Polish Army of General Rydz-Smigla. But operation "Kiev's Cannae" was not to be carried out.<sup>2</sup> Yakir's and Golikov's groups were slow to complete their assignments; and the First Horse, in violation of its orders, did not strike Rydz-Smigla's rear. Instead they bypassed fortified Kazatin and seized Berdichev and Zhitomir with their rich warehouses. The success of the Southwest Front was incomplete. The Poles lost all of the territory they had seized in the Ukraine, but they managed to escape as an army.

During the Soviet offensive Commander-in-Chief Kamenev devised a plan for the further conduct of the campaign, which received the approval of the Politburo. It was projected that once all the Red forces had reached the Brest–Southern Bug line, the administration of the Southwest Front (Commander Egorov, and Revolutionary Military Council members Stalin and Berzin) would turn over to Tukhachevsky (as commander of the Western Front) the First Horse and the 12th and 14th Armies; and that they themselves would proceed against Wrangel, who was advancing into northern Tavrida. Stalin was not at all pleased with the prospect of not participating in the forthcoming capture of Poland. Tukhachevsky later wrote that "the existence of the capitalist world, not just of Poland, but of all Europe was wagered on that card."<sup>3</sup> Stalin, the fiery revolutionary, wanted to attack world capitalism personally.

By the middle of July 1920, Tukhachevsky's troops had overrun the opposing front of General Szeptitski, had occupied Bobriusk, Minsk, and Vilno, and had burst into Polish territory. The Poles' situation became desperate. Warsaw was in danger and with it the young Polish state. Western diplomacy rushed to help Jozef Pilsudski. On July 12, Curzon issued an ultimatum. The English minister of foreign affairs demanded that military activity cease and that a so-called ethnographic boundary be established between Poland and Soviet Russia, approximately where the border is now. The ultimatum was rejected, but after a direct appeal by the Poles, negotiations were



begun at Borisov. Meanwhile, the Red offensive continued on both fronts.

At the beginning of August Kamenev reached the decision about a concentric strike with all forces against Warsaw. In connection with this he gave the order to transfer to the command of the Western Front (to Tukhachevsky) the 12th and First Horse Armies at first, and later also the 14th. The Polish leader, Pilsudski, considered his situation at that moment to be catastrophic. He believed that Polish forces would not be able to hold back an attack from the east and south and asked the commandant of Lvov fortified region to draw in at least three Red divisions.

Suddenly Pilsudski was given reason for hope. The command of the Southwest Front stormed Lvov with the very armies that were to have been sent against Warsaw. The Red's original plan was destroyed, and the enemy received an unexpected chance to organize a counteroffensive. Part of the blame has to be laid on Kamenev because he was insufficiently firm in implementing his own directives and at the last moment became frightened of an imaginary Rumanian threat. But the greater responsibility must rest with Stalin, who so badly wanted the sensational success of taking Lvov. Spineless Egorov could not stand up to the future Great Leader. Lvov was well fortified, however, and the First Horse and the 12th Army were not up to taking it. Lenin categorically protested against striking "with five fingers spread wide" and insisted upon taking Warsaw. Stalin stood by his guns. For ten days a fruitless exchange of telegrams went on. Finally on August 13, under pressure from Lenin, Kamenev categorically demanded that his directive to transfer the three armies to Tukhachevsky be carried out. Stalin remained true to himself and did not sign the order prepared by Egorov. It should be remembered that in those years an order by a commander did not have legal force unless it was also signed by one of the members of the Revolutionary Council. Until then Stalin, as the senior member of the Revolutionary Military Council, had signed all of the operational orders of the commander. Another of the political commissars of the front, P. I. Berzin, tried to stay out of purely military matters and signed the order only after a direct command from Trotsky.

Stalin's willfulness stopped his military career for twenty years. He was about to send a telegram of resignation to Moscow, calculating that this threat would force acceptance of his plan of action. But the plenum of the Central Committee, which was then meeting, removed Stalin

from the front and from all other military work as well. He was not reelected to the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic.

The First Horse was transferred and assigned to the Warsaw offensive. But time had been wasted and the situation had drastically changed. The Poles took advantage of the breathing space and went over to the counteroffensive. The Polish command directed a strike between the Soviet fronts at the weak Mozyrsk group and further disrupted the campaign. Now the Poles' slight numerical superiority and better equipment complemented a solid operational advantage. The war had also aroused the Polish people's patriotic feeling. The hope of the Bolsheviks and their Polish colleagues (Dzerzhinsky, Markhlevsky, Unshlikht) that the Polish proletariat would support the Bolsheviks turned out to be a chimera.<sup>4</sup>

The Red Army retreated on both fronts, yielding to the Poles the western parts of the Ukraine and Belorussia. The First Horse drew back to Zamoste, barely escaping destruction. The Peace of Riga, in March 1921, established the border much farther east than the "Curzon line."

Tukhachevsky, whom Stalin's self-seeking actions had deprived of the chance to successfully complete the operation, never did try to identify those responsible for the defeat.<sup>5</sup> Stalin and his minions were not so delicate. Even before Tukhachevsky's arrest, they accused him of mistakes on the Polish Front. After the marshal's death all the textbooks and military works carried the standard formula that the traitors Trotsky and Tukhachevsky prevented the capture of Lvov and Warsaw.

The lessons of the Polish campaign permit a sober assessment of the strengths and weakness of the First Horse Army and also of the conception of a strategic cavalry in general. Massed cavalry were effective in breakthroughs, in raids into the enemy's rear, and in forays. The Civil War differed from the just-concluded World War in that the front lines were not continuous and the fire was not as dense. Each of the extremely long fronts had only 135 to 185 riflemen for each verst (0.66 mile), less than the corresponding ratio for outposts in the World War and not enough to prevent a breakthrough. Because of the absence of echeloned defenses, incursions into the rear of the enemy were often unopposed, and assaults on troop concentrations were frequently carried out with complete surprise. When the cavalry tried to overrun prepared defenses, however, it lost its advantage, suffering large losses and often failing. This happened at Bataisk and at Lvov, where repeated assaults were repulsed.



The cavalry was also badly suited to conduct defensive battles, where the close support of the infantry was needed. The strength of the cavalry, however, lay in its ability to carry out assignments independently of an army's main forces. A seemingly insoluble contradiction arose. Massed cavalry were needed only for a short period of the Civil War and were useful only in certain conditions. Voroshilov, Budenny, and Egorov found, however, that armed with the dialectic, Marxist military thought could solve the dilemma. They declared that all future wars would be exclusively mobile, and since the Red Army would only attack, it could not do without a powerful cavalry.

In all types of combat actions the First Horse was vulnerable from the air. Aerial attacks caused heavy losses at Lvov and later against Wrangel. Voroshilov complained to Frunze in November 1920, "We have nothing to counter aerial bombing by groups of airplanes against massed cavalry."<sup>6</sup>

Earlier, however, on its way to the front against Wrangel, the Horse Army suffered its worst experience. Having just tasted the bitterness of defeat, the battered First Horse began to come apart. The ill-assorted troops of Budenny's army never had sinned on the side of excessive discipline. The Revolutionary Military Council of the First Horse only with difficulty reined in the free-spirited horsemen. Also, because of the necessity of provisioning themselves, the Army often came into sharp conflict with the civilian population. The army command on several occasions had had to justify their conduct on this score to higher authorities, all the way up to Lenin and Trotsky. Voroshilov turned A. Ia. Parkhomenko, commandant of the city of Rostov, over to a tribunal for having organized a pogrom against the Jewish population. He was sentenced to death, and only the intervention of Stalin and Ordzhonikidze saved the life of this legendary divisional commander.

What happened when the First Horse was transferred from the Polish Front was even more serious. The cavalrymen's morals, which were honestly described by Babel, horrified many of his readers. On their way to the Crimea, the troops pillaged the civilians. Shepelev, commissar of the 6th Cavalry Division, was killed trying to stop them and Voroshilov had to act decisively. According to his biographer Orlovsky, himself a former secretary of the Horse Army's Military Revolutionary Council, Voroshilov believed that this outburst of "partisan behavior" could destroy the Army.<sup>7</sup> He put a whole division on trial, an event unprecedented in the Red Army, and had it disbanded. Under the

muzzle of the "special forces" the troops surrendered their colors and arms and began to name the pillagers. Of the 150 taken, 101 were shot. With their blood the men of the division were given the chance to wash away their shame.

The First Horse traveled slowly to the front against Wrangel and arrived seriously weakened. Moreover, Voroshilov and Budenny did not want to fight in the Crimea except according to their own plans. Because they had gained special status, Frunze sent them into action only when victory was no longer in doubt.

The last major outbreak of "the partisan movement" occurred in 1921 in the Northern Caucasus. Because of opposition to the grain requisitioning, a brigade led by Maslakov broke off from the First Horse and became an anti-Soviet partisan detachment. Self-provisioning continued, with its unavoidable theft. The tribunals that followed did their work, and a substantial number of the Horse Army's troops were executed. The First Horse Army itself was soon disbanded.

The battle for the Crimea, which developed in the fall of 1920, was full of tension and drama. The confrontation between Wrangel and Frunze ended in the complete victory of the latter. However, the history of the Crimean-Tavridian operation has long been misrepresented. Most attention has been paid to those personalities who are supposed to have played the leading roles in the Civil War, namely the First Horse Army, whose participation in that operation was minor and not particularly successful.<sup>1</sup>

The facts of the matter were considerably enlightened by the appearance of V. V. Dushenkin's book, *The Second Horse*.<sup>2</sup> It was impossible, however, to tell the whole truth about the fate of Army Commander Mironov in a censored publication. S. Starikov and R. Medvedev did that in their substantial—320 typed pages—historical essay “The Life and Death of Filipp Kuz'mich Mironov: Soviet Authority and the Don Cossacks 1917–1921.” From that unpublished work, which contains numerous genuine documents of the time, we have taken the main facts for a brief biography of Mironov.<sup>3</sup>

Filipp Mironov was born into a poor Cossack family in 1872. He completed the local parish school and two years of high school in his native Ust-Medveditsky region (*okrug*). He completed high school by examination, without attending further classes. Mironov received his military education at a Cossack cadet school and at age thirty held the rank of cornet. In the Russo-Japanese War he earned four decorations and a promotion (to *podesaul*). In 1906 at the height of the Revolution, he spoke at his Cossack village meeting against the mobilization of the Cossacks for internal, that is, police duty. Because of that, soon after he returned to his regiment he was deprived of his officer status. Mironov returned to his native village and farmed. From 1910 to 1912 he served as head of the land department of the Don Territory (*oblast'*) administration, where he worked out projects for the equalization of land allotments for Cossacks of the upper and lower villages and for the allotting of land to non-Cossacks.

At the beginning of the World War, Mironov volunteered and went to the front. He was made an officer again and fought bravely for which he was awarded the Order of St. George's Sword, four other decorations, and two promotions to *esaul* and troop elder (the Cossack equivalent of lieutenant colonel).

Mironov was a Cossack *intelligent*, a rebel, and a defender of the people's rights. He put the ideals of freedom ahead of any party programs. The revolution gave great scope to his social temperament. Later, when he was on trial, his defender was quite right to call him "the lion of the Revolution."

In April 1917, after a run-in with his regimental commander, Mironov took leave and headed for the Don. In his native village he organized a local group of People's Socialist Workers. During the Kornilov revolt he spoke openly against Kaledin and made an unsuccessful attempt to arrest him.

In October Mironov returned to the front to his regiment. He greeted the Bolshevik Revolution, in his word, "unsympathetically." His political platform was "a democratic republic on a federative basis, the right of popular referendum, the right of popular initiative, etc." However, Mironov actively and successfully resisted the use of Cossack units to put down the Bolsheviks. He took the 32nd Regiment under his command and led it to the Don, where he arrived in January 1918.

By that time Mironov's sympathies were with the Bolsheviks. He was not, however, a thorough Bolshevik himself, and he never did become one. He immediately opposed the revolutionary committee of Mikhailovka village, which was shooting officers by the bunch just because they were officers. He succeeded in having the committee reelected, then he disbanded his regiment and went to Ust-Medveditsky to establish Soviet authority. Mironov became military commissar of the region and a member of the executive committee.

Kaledin committed suicide. By March 1918 the Soviets had taken over almost the whole Don, but they did not keep it long. General Krasnov organized a White Cossack army and invited the Germans to the Don. Detachments of officers made their way there. The Don Soviet Republic ceased to be, its Council of People's Commissars moved to Tsaritsyn. They held out longer in the north, in Ust-Medveditsky and Khopersky regions, where Mironov commanded the troops. He had very small forces, but he fought successfully. His



popularity grew on both sides of the front. Krasnov is supposed to have said, "I have a lot of officers, but I don't have a single Mironov."

Mironov worked miracles to hold off the White Cossack armies storming Tsaritsyn. That, however, did not increase the political commissars' trust of him. Stalin wrote Lenin on August 4: "Cossack units that call themselves Soviet cannot but want to fight the Cossack counterrevolution; Cossacks have gone over to Mironov's side in whole regiments to get weapons, to learn the disposition of our troops on the spot and then lead away whole regiments to Krasnov's side; Mironov has been surrounded three times by Cossacks who knew everything about his sector and, naturally, destroyed him utterly."

Stalin, of course, did not pay particular attention to the facts and invented the threefold destruction of Mironov to justify the generally bad situation around Tsaritsyn, which had been caused by Stalin and Voroshilov's glaring stupidities and their destruction of the specialists. It was Stalin who, having killed the honest officers in the RKKA's ranks, overlooked the real traitor Nosovich and who, when Nosovich defected to the Whites, appointed Denikin's agent Kovalevsky as military instructor. There was no need for Mironov to carry out Nosovich's treacherous orders. Moscow tended to believe a TSK member rather than the Cossack lieutenant colonel, and Mironov did not receive the reinforcements he requested.

Mironov hung on despite all odds. Instead of reinforcements they gave him a decoration. His brigade continued to grow as deserters continued to leave Krasnov; it soon became a division, at first the 1st Ust-Medveditsky, later the 23rd. Mironov tried to maintain the honor of the revolutionary army. He struggled against pillaging, anti-Semitic agitation and pogroms. He did not shoot his prisoners, but permitted them to return to their homes.

During the Red offensive in early 1919 Mironov commanded a group of troops of the 9th Army. Once they had taken the northern part of Don territory from Krasnov, the Bolsheviks no longer fooled around with elected Soviets. Revolutionary committees were set up everywhere with power over the life, death, and property of the local inhabitants. It broke Mironov's heart to see how people were becoming heads of local revolutionary committees who "should not be permitted to run regional affairs because of the way they had behaved when the Revolution was in danger. Now, when the Revolution was strong, all of the slugs were crawling out in the sun and dirtying it."



Mironov protested energetically, but his quixotic outbursts were as useless as he knew they would be. Everyone knew that the commissars he complained of were good for nothing. Still they were left in place. Such things were going on at the Don that everyone needed his own men in place, however bad they might be. There was no room for Mironov. The first to ask for his removal was Chairman of the Donburo S. Syrtsov, later head of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front: "remove Mironov from his native villages, if necessary by promoting him." Trotsky ordered Mironov to come to the commander-in-chief's headquarters in Serpukhov. Despite all the efforts of Sokolnikov, who was a member of the RVS of the Southern Front and the TSK, and of Kniagnitsky, commander of the 9th Army, Mironov had to leave his units at the height of the offensive. On the surface Mironov's recall looked entirely regular. The RVSR awarded Mironov a gold watch and chain, and the 23rd Division was given the Red Banner.

If one thinks about it, the recall was a good, humanitarian act. It was just then, in early 1919, that at the Don and in other Cossack regions the Bolsheviks began something that Mironov, who was extremely sensitive to injustice, arbitrariness, and violence, could not have stood — "de-Cossackization."

Mironov, a Cossack who was still not a Party member, knew nothing of all this. During his enforced idleness at headquarters he sent a report to the RVSR, which read in part:

So that the Cossack population remains sympathetic to the Soviet authorities, it is necessary:

1. To be concerned with the historical, traditional, and religious facets of their life. Time and capable political workers will dispel the darkness and the fanaticism of the Cossacks, inculcated by centuries of barracks upbringing. . . .
2. During the revolutionary period of the struggle with the bourgeoisie, until the counterrevolution is suppressed on the Don, circumstances require that the idea of communism be transmitted to the minds of the Cossack and peasant populations by means of lectures, conversations, brochures, etc., but in no circumstances forced upon them violently, as seems to be the case now in the acts of the "casual communists."
3. At the moment it is not necessary to make an inventory of livestock and dead stock. It would be better to announce firm

prices and demand delivery of products from the population . . . in the course of which it is necessary to take their prosperity into account. . . .

Of course, the capable political workers, just like the casual communists, took guidance from a circular (and secret) letter of the TSK RKP(b) of January 29, 1919. Here is that startling document.

It is necessary, considering the experience of the civil war with the Cossacks, to recognize that the only proper approach is a merciless struggle against the *whole* Cossack leadership *to destroy them to the last man*.

1. Carry out *mass terror* [emphasis in the original] against wealthy Cossacks, and *having killed them all* conduct merciless mass terror against *all Cossacks* who take *any part, direct or indirect*, in the struggle with Soviet power. Take *all measures against the middle Cossacks* to guarantee there will be no efforts on their part to mount new demonstrations against Soviet power.

What sort of measures they had in mind was best explained by I. Yakir, a member of the RVS of the 8th Army, which was then operating at the Don. He wrote: "There will be rebellions in the rear of our troops in the future unless *measures* are taken to nip in the bud even the *thought* of such rebellions. These *measures*: the *complete annihilation of all* who rebel, *execution on the spot of all* who possess weapons, and even the *execution of a certain percentage* of the male population. There must be *no negotiations* with rebels."

Thus, the complete annihilation of (a) the rich, (b) those who take any part in rebellions, (c) those who possess weapons. It is interesting to ask, what Cossack did not have a weapon? A percentage of the rest, who happened not to fall into any of those categories, were to be killed to teach the others not even to think of rebellion. And who would live on this land purified by revolutionary justice? The answer is contained in that same letter of the TSK to which we now return:

2. Confiscate grain [since it is not said *from whom*, it implies *from all*] and require that all *surplus* [an obvious logical redundancy, for what can be surplus after confiscation] be brought to specified places. This refers to grain as well as to *all other* agricultural products.

3. Take all measures to assist poor, newly arrived settlers;

organize resettlement where that is possible.

4. Equalize newly arrived non-Cossacks with the Cossacks in land holding and in all other relations [except apparently in mass executions].

5. Carry out full disarmament. Shoot *everyone* who possesses a weapon after the deadline for turning them in.

6. Distribute arms only to reliable elements among the *non-Cossacks*.

7. Maintain armed detachments in Cossack villages until complete order is established.

8. All commissars who are assigned to Cossack settlements are expected to be *absolutely firm* and to carry out these orders *unswervingly*. The Central Committee decrees that the obligation be passed to the People's Commissariat of Agriculture through the appropriate Soviet organs to work out as soon as possible the actual means for a *massive* resettlement of poor peasants to Cossacks lands. TSK RKP(b).

The Cossacks are a nationality, close to the Russians in language and religion, but with a wholly different way of life formed by centuries of history.<sup>4</sup> The TSK directive was a firm plan for genocide to be carried out in all eleven Cossack territories. It called also for organized colonization of the land thus freed by another ethnic group, chosen on the basis of property. This policy was applied all through the first half of 1919 and had particularly noticeable results in the Don and Ural River territories.

Proscriptions reached the scale of a natural disaster. Exact totals have not been made, but the toll reached the tens of thousands. Reliable non-Cossacks under the leadership of the commissars cut the Cossacks down right and left, brandishing the red banner as they did so. The thin shell of class struggle immediately fell to pieces, laying bare its animalistic essence. They killed the wealthy and the middling; nor did they spare the malcontents who let slip a harsh word. They just settled their accounts. If the Cossack men were not at home, they led out their wives, even their daughters, to be shot.

Not all of the executions were illegal. The Cheka and Army tribunals were hard at work. From the time of their arrival at the Don they were organized in every regiment. An order of the RVS of the Southern Front said, "Witnesses may be questioned if the tribunal finds it necessary."

The tribunals hardly ever availed themselves of that right, preferring to judge by lists. Usually the trial and sentencing (death by shooting) took only a few minutes. The 8th Army alone officially signed eight thousand people over to the hereafter. Other armies did not lag far behind, particularly the 10th. Worldly-wise Cossacks had to admit that the Bolsheviks were "pretty severe."

All this monstrous cruelty could not remain unanswered. On the night of March 11–12 a rebellion broke out in Kazanskaia and Veshenskaia *stanitsas*. A description of it can be found in the novel *And Quiet Flows the Don*,<sup>5</sup> although the picture given there is incomplete. Sholokhov, using Kriukov's manuscript, toned things down, as he admitted in a letter to Gorky, "I left out on purpose certain facts about the direct cause of the rebellion, such as the senseless shooting of sixty-two Cossack old men in Migulinskaia or the shootings in Kazanskaia and Shumilinskaia, where the number of Cossack victims exceeded 400 in the course of six days." From the novel one might think the revolutionary committees committed several abusive acts, which cost the lives of a few dozen people. Because of that the sixth part of *And Quiet Flows the Don* was withheld from the printers for a long time.

When their facile circular letter resulted in a desperate rebellion, which moreover had broken out dangerously close to Denikin, Moscow had to stop and think again. On March 16, in response to Sokolnikov's report, the TSK decided to halt the effort to destroy the Cossacks. That same day Ia. Sverdlov, who had been seriously ill and who had not attended the meeting, died. Because of that coincidence several historians have tried to place the blame on him alone. They claim that the directive of January 29 had been promulgated by the Orgburo, headed by Sverdlov, without the knowledge of the TSK or Lenin. The only evidence for this is that Sverdlov signed the covering letter sent with the circular letter. It is not possible to explain away, however, the fact that in carrying out the final part of the directive the Council of People's Commissars issued a directive in April (!) concerning the resettling of poor peasants on Cossack lands.

The people on the spot were reluctant to stop the genocide. The Donburo continued the former policy until June despite the protests of various Party workers.<sup>6</sup> The Southern Front revoked its orders about terror only at the end of April. The de-Cossackization was actually stopped by Denikin's offensive, which by the end of June occupied all the Don territory and seized Tsaritsyn.



We left Mironov at the moment that Trotsky's orders took him from the front. Mironov did not find the People's Commissar of Army and Navy at Serpukhov headquarters and had to go on to Moscow. It immediately became clear in his conversation with Trotsky that Trotsky did not have definite plans for using him. They agreed that Mironov would form a Cossack cavalry division of six regiments, which was confirmed by an order of the RVSR on March 15. Mironov went to Kozlov where the Southern Front command was located. There he was to receive 15 million rubles, mainly to purchase horses.

The behind-the-scenes maneuvering started again. The commissars of the Donburo and the Southern Front were determined not to allow Mironov to return, because he might serve as a rallying point for shattered Cossacks. They convinced Trotsky that Mironov was a threat to the Donburo, Soviet authority, and Trotsky himself. At Kozlov they refused to give him the money and forbade him to leave for the Don. They sent him to Serpukhov and put him at the service of Commander-in-Chief Vatsetis. Mironov was posted to Smolensk as assistant commander of the Belorussian-Lithuanian Army. He soon became commander, but still he felt as if he were in exile. Vague rumors of what was happening on the Don reached him, but of course he could not know what was really going on.

Meanwhile the bloody chaos in the Don territory was paving the way for the defeat of the Red forces. The rebels defeated Khvesin's expeditionary (punitive) corps, which was sent to pacify the Don. Three of Denikin's regiments broke through the front from the South and pushed as far as Kazanskaia. The northern Don territories were now threatened by the uprising.

Now was the time for Mironov to make his reappearance. At Sokolnikov's suggestion the RVSR appointed Mironov commander of the expeditionary corps, which was renamed a Special Corps. Mironov hurried to the Don, where in the northern regions, which were now in extreme danger, an emergency mobilization was in progress. Mironov agitated passionately at meetings urging the Cossacks to attack Denikin. His enormous personal authority got the job done.

Mironov and the newly appointed commissar, V. Trifonov, rode to take over the corps from Khvesin. The corps presented a sad spectacle. Whole Cossack squadrons had gone over to the enemy. Only eighty men were left in a regiment, 120 in the brigades. He would have to start from scratch and so informed the Southern Front command.



By this time Mironov knew the truth of de-Cossackization and the Veshenskaia uprising. Through all the turmoil of forming new units he was tormented by doubts. He cast about desperately for some way out of this bloody nightmare. He understood that he could not make common cause with Denikin and that the Reds, in the name of their sociological schemes, were prepared to tear the Cossack presence out by the roots. Mironov poured all of his troubled soul into an extremely long telegram to Trotsky, Lenin, and Kalinin, which he sent from Anna Station on June 24. One cannot read that document without emotion.

I stood and I stand not for the cellular organization of national life along a narrow Party program, but for a public structure in which the people take an active part. I do not have the bourgeoisie and kulaks in mind here. Only this sort of structure will gain the sympathies of the peasant masses and parts of the honest intelligentsia.

Further on he described the condition of the corps:

The special corps has about three thousand men to cover 145 versts of front. The units are strained and exhausted. Except for three classes all the cadets have proven to be beneath criticism and those pitiful tens and hundreds are all that are left of many thousands. The communist regiment has fled. There were men in it who did not know how to load a rifle. The special corps might serve as a screen. The situation of the special corps is saved now only by the fact that Cossacks mobilized from Khopersky region have been brought in. General Denikin's reliance on that region was not wholly justified. As soon as the White guards have corrected that deficiency, the special corps, as a screen, will be broken.

Without equivocation or evasions Mironov named the causes of the impending catastrophe:

It is not only on the Don that the actions of some revolutionary committees, special detachments, tribunals, and some commissars [Mironov wrote "some" only because he did not know of the TSK directive] have caused a massive uprising. That uprising threatens to spill over in a broad wave through peasant villages across the face of the whole republic. To say that voices called out

openly in village meetings at Novaia Chigla, Verkho-Tishanka, and elsewhere, "Give us the tsar," sheds light on the mood of the peasant masses, which has resulted in such a high percentage of deserters and has created detachments of Greens. The uprising in Ilovatka on the Tersa River is contained for the time being, but serious unrest in most of the *uezds* of Saratov *guberniia* threatens to destroy the cause of socialist revolution. I am not a Party man, but I have spent too much of my strength and health in the struggle for socialist revolution, to watch unconcerned while General Denikin on his horse "Komuniia" tramples the red banner of labor.

Having analyzed the situation and come to the point, Mironov made his recommendations. The first concerned the Special Corps:

Looking thoughtfully into the future and seeing the death of the social revolution, for nothing disposes me to optimism and I am rarely a mistaken pessimist, I consider it necessary to recommend the following measures urgently: first, strengthen the special corps with fresh divisions; second, transfer to it the 23rd Division as the foundation for a future powerful new army, with which I and division commander Golikov will personally seize the initiative to set an example for other divisions and armies; or (third) appoint me commander of the 9th Army, where my combat authority stands high. . . .

Then came his political program:

Fourth, the political condition of the country urgently requires the calling of a popular representative body, and not just of one party, so as to cut the ground out from under the traitorous socialists, while continuing the struggle on the front and establishing the power of the Red Army.

This step will recapture the sympathy of the people, who will gladly take up arms to save their land and freedom. This representative body need not be called a *zemskii sobor* or a constituent assembly, *but it must be convened. The people are groaning.* I have sent many reports to the Southern Front *revvoensovet* among them this: a peasant of the 34th Department, now renamed Lenin Region. A family of twenty-one with four pairs of oxen. Their own commune. For refusal to enter a commune a commissar

seized their oxen, and when the peasant protested, they killed him. I also transmitted a report from chairman Ermak of one of the tribunals, whose words were terrible to read. I repeat, the people are *ready* to fling themselves into the embrace of the landlord cabal, in hopes that their suffering will not be so painful, so obvious as it is now.

His last suggestion concerned the holy of holies, the Bolshevik Party:

Fifth, the purge of the Party must be carried out on the following principle. All Communists (who joined the Party) after the October Revolution must be formed into companies and sent to the front. You will then see who are the real communists, who are the self-seekers, who are the provocateurs, and who have been polluting all the revolutionary committees and special detachments. The Morozovsky revolutionary committee, which killed sixty-seven people and then was itself shot, is a good example.

[Original signed by Special Corps Commander Citizen Mironov]

After so many years it makes no sense to judge which of Mironov's suggestions were realistic and to what degree. This was a *cri de coeur* of an honest and ardent warrior for the Revolution. His telegram was not answered.

Denikin continued to advance. The Reds lost the Don, Donbass, and Tsaritsyn. The Special Corps was no longer useful either as a punitive unit or as a screen. Mironov advanced the idea to create a Cossack Corps from men already mobilized and those who had fled from the Don region to attack Denikin's cavalry. This time the capital was not deaf. The corps commander was called to Moscow. On July 7 he appeared in the Cossack department of the VTSIK and was made part of its staff. The next day he and Makarov, commissar of the department, visited Lenin. Lenin supported the creation of a corps of Cossacks, and after Mironov left he said to Makarov, "We need such men. We must use them well." They did indeed use men like Mironov—as long as they needed them.

With the authorities' blessing Mironov set off for Saransk to form his corps. But once again all expectations, promises, and hopes proved chimerical. They gave him nothing—no horses, no men, no ammunition, not even decent political workers. The so-called "Khopersk

communists" had ensconced themselves in the RVS and the political department. Larin, Boldyrev, Rogachev, Zaitsev, who were splattered from head to foot with Cossack blood, felt no remorse for their victims, only fierce hatred. The Cossack department of the VTSIK warned that they "must not be allowed in the Don territory, because they have left there an awful memory. . . . in general they must not be trusted in any case. . . ." This warning was disregarded. The commissar of the Special Corps, V. Trifonov, refused to work with Mironov after it was decided to organize a Cossack corps. The old Party man felt at home in a punitive unit, but he considered Cossack units foolhardy.

The "Khopersk communists" waged a deadly campaign against the commander. Slandorous reports flew to Moscow demanding that the corps be dispersed or at least that Mironov be removed.

Mironov was squeezed from all sides. The Southern Front RVS and individual "commissar-Cossack eaters" held up the formation of the corps. Refugees from the Don told him new horror stories of violence against the Cossacks. Mironov decided to turn to Lenin, whom he now knew personally. The letter was sent on July 31.

Mironov began with an account of his telegram of June 24, after which he described the repressions on the Don and in Saratov *guberniia*. He wrote that news of mass executions did not surprise him,

because I have already seen the main outlines of the Communists' policy toward the Cossacks, who are guilty only of ignorance and illiteracy; guilty of the fatal mistake of having been born of free Russian peasantry who at some time ran away from the yoke of the boyars and their truncheons to the free steppe of the Don; guilty because the Russian people during the reign of Peter I stifled their freedom at the cost of their blood; guilty because after enslaving them the tsarist authorities became more attentive to the Cossacks and by means of long disciplinary regime exterminated their humane feelings and turned them into the police guards of Russian thought, of Russian life; guilty because agents of Soviet power paid them even greater attention and instead of the word of love brought to the Don and the Ural—revenge, arson, and destruction. How can we justify what those villains did in Veshenskaia, the village which first understood their fatal mistake and in January 1919 abandoned the Kachaevo-Bogucharsky Front? That behavior caused the massive rebellion on the Don. If it was



not fatal, it was in any case an awful thing, fraught with endless consequences for the course of the whole revolution.

Again he offered examples of executions and pillaging. The 8th Army tribunals often shot Cossacks only for asking to be paid for horses and grain that were taken from them.

It is impossible, there is not enough time and paper, Vladimir Ilich, to describe the horrors of "building communism" on the Don . . . . A certain D. Varov in Pravda, #136, in an article "On the Don" touched upon the events in Veshenskaia, but feared apparently to offend the Communists. For him these events were only "discomforting," and the Cossacks who rebelled against the violence and oppression became "White guard sympathizers." . . . Another Soviet correspondent, a certain A. V. poured all of the atrocities, violence, and horrors into the single phrase, "the not always tactful acts of the representatives of authority." The servile soul of the autocracy's scribblers has passed into the scribblers of the Soviet authorities. The people do not need their servants of the free word in servants' livery.

Mironov *did not believe* that Lenin knew what was going on:

I cannot agree, I cannot accept that you have looked perfunctorily on all these horrors, and that it was done with your approval. I can no longer be silent, I have not the strength to bear the people's suffering in the name of an abstract, far-distant something or other.

Turning to the situation on the Southern Front, Mironov explained to Lenin:

Only by successfully strengthening the rear might the fighting line of the front have been made invincible. To strengthen the rear it was necessary to understand its psychology, its peculiarities, its weak points, etc. Unfortunately, the political leaders of the Southern Front did not have that knowledge. . . . Our units marched forward in good order, causing no disturbances among the Cossacks, who had been told and written so much about the "atrocities" of the Bolsheviks. The impression, therefore, was most favorable. . . . When our units had passed, the Political Departments of the armies, divisions, and brigades set about their



organization, but unfortunately because of technical limitations and purely bureaucratic organization they were not able to carry out a single one of their grandiose plans. . . . The hastily put together *okrug* and *volost* revolutionary committees did not understand their functions, they looked on the Cossacks with the eyes of *suppressors*. And then the requisitions, confiscations, arrests, and so forth began. . . . The destruction of the Cossacks became an irrefutable fact, as soon as the Don became Soviet. . . . I do not believe that honest factory workers have accepted the elimination of honest people and the shooting of innocent village workers like themselves, even in the name of social justice. . . .

Mironov hurled the most serious accusation in Lenin's face: "What do we call these acts by the Reds? The whole activity of the Communist Party, led by you, is directed at the destruction of the Cossacks, at the destruction of mankind in general." He recalled:

In a telegram to you, Vladimir Ilich, I implored you to change the policy, to make a revolutionary concession, to ameliorate the suffering of the people and by that step to attract the people to the side of Soviet power, to the side of strengthening the revolution. . . . In these views, I repeat, I differ from the Communists. This is the root of the distrust of me. And the Communists are right. I will not support their policy of destruction of the Cossacks and then of the better-off peasants. . . . I will not participate in this madness, which has just become evident to me, and with all the strength that is in me I will fight against the destruction of the Cossacks and the middle peasantry. . . . I am in favor of leaving the peasants alone as far as their religion and traditions go and of leading them to a better life by *our example*, by demonstration, not by the fine, ringing phrases of half-baked Communists, whose lips are still wet with milk, the majority of whom cannot tell wheat from barley, although at meetings, with great aplomb they teach the peasants how to farm.

In this emotional and not particularly coherent letter he repeats frequently his appeal to stop the destruction of the Cossacks: "I demand in the name of the Revolution and on behalf of tortured Cossackdom a halt to the policy of their destruction. . . . If this continues, we will have to stop fighting Krasnov and fight the Com-

munists.” Nonetheless the independent Mironov announced: “I will go to the end with the Bolshevik Party—if they conduct a policy which does not diverge in word or deed—as I have done so far. . . .” At that point he produced his demands:

The social life of the Russian people, to which [category] the Cossacks belong, must be constructed in accordance with its historical, cultural, and religious traditions and views, and the future must be left to time. . . . In carrying out the current struggle we had the opportunity to see . . . for Marxism the present is only the means, and the future is only a goal. And if that is so, I refuse to take part in such construction in which the whole people and everything they have earned is squandered on the goal of a distant, abstract future. Is contemporary man not a goal? Is he really so bereft of organs of sensation that we want to build the happiness of some far-off mankind at the cost of suffering? No it is time to stop the *experiments*. The almost two-year experiment in the people’s suffering must have convinced the Communists that denying the human personality is madness.

The situation left Mironov deeply divided: “Because of my long-held revolutionary and social convictions, I do not want to ally myself with Denikin, Kolchak, Petliura, Grigor’ev, and the other counterrevolutionaries, but I look with equal repugnance upon the violence which false Communists have inflicted upon the laboring people, and because of that I cannot be their supporter either. . . .”

Mironov knew very well that his struggle with the evil, “caused by individual agents of authority,” might cost him his life, but he was given strength by the certainty that his was not “an individual protest against this evil spread across the face of the republic, but a collective protest, a protest of tens of millions of people.”

Mironov wanted to remain a soldier of the Revolution:

Suffering with all my soul for the laboring people and the possible loss of revolutionary conquests, I feel that I can render important assistance at this critical moment of the struggle *under the following conditions*: that there be a clear and definite policy on the Cossack question and complete trust in me and my *independent* but vitally healthy views. Whether I deserve that trust, you can judge by this letter.

Since this letter reflects not [only] my personal view of the situation, but the view of millions of peasants and Cossacks, I have thought it necessary to send copies of this letter at the same time to my many loyal friends. Sincerely respectful of you and devoted to your ideas [I am] Commander of the Don Corps, Citizen, Cossack of Ust-Medveditskaia *stanitsa*, Mironov.

Mironov did not receive a reply to his confession, his desperate call, his *cri de coeur*. The same was true of his telegram from Anna Station. Lenin read Mironov's letter. That is evidenced by notes in his hand, "important," "very important," "very good," and so forth. It is said that he received the letter after a long delay—not until the autumn. That is possible, although very strange. But, really, what could he have written in reply?

Not having received a reply to his appeal, Mironov made one more attempt to improve relations with the Soviet authorities. On August 8 he submitted to the Political Department a request "to register him as a member of the RKP" and to bring that to the attention of Kalinin, Trotsky, and Lenin. The "Khopersk communists" refused with great pleasure. The situation at the front was bad. The breakthrough of Mamontov's cavalry corps had put Tambov and Kozlov in the Whites' hands. Inactivity became unbearable. Mironov began to prepare the corps for an attack on Denikin, reports of which reached the RVS of the Republic. I. Smigla, a TSK and RVS member, whom Mironov trusted, ordered him by direct-line telegraph "not to dispatch a single unit without permission." In reply to Mironov's objections Smigla invited him to come to Penza.

Mironov made ready for the trip, but the stationmaster refused him the cars for his escort of 150 men, to which Smigla had agreed. On August 18 it became known that the Political Department had officially ordered the disbanding of the Don Corps on the grounds that Mironov was a "Grigorevite." He could not travel without his escort. Mironov knew the commissars were set on violence. Mironov decided upon a demonstration. The denouement was approaching.

On August 22, Mironov issued his "Order-Proclamation." Having described the destruction of the Cossacks being carried out "by new Vandals, who have revived by their evil deeds the times of the Middle Ages and the inquisition," he declared:

There remains only one way to save the victories of the Revolution: overthrow the Communist Party. As soon as this news from the Southern Front reaches the Cossacks, they will stop and abandon the generals and landlords, whom they have followed only in the name of trampled truths.

Citizen Cossacks and soldiers of the Don Territory! We die on the front, spilling blood in unequal battle for land and for the true happiness of men, which only they themselves can fashion, not a bunch of people who do not know life. By its appearance the corps will lift the spirits of Red soldiers. Remember, you are not alone. The true spirit of the suffering people is with you. If you die in battle, you die for truth. Christ loved truth and died for it. Better to die in the open field than to lie on one's stove resenting the people's suffering.

That same day Mironov spoke at a meeting. The next day he informed the Southern Front, "I am setting out with the forces at my disposal to fight Denikin and the bourgeoisie."

On August 24, the day of the attack, he addressed a telegram to "Citizen member of the rvs of the Republic Smigla, copy to the Russian people." Mironov declared that he was not after the Communists' blood and would not shoot first. He offered to make an alliance against Denikin to save the Revolution, saying, "do not forget that the Paris Commune was killed by the common man. The Don Corps waits on your political wisdom and statesmanship in order to destroy Denikin with our common forces. . . ." He issued an appeal to the Russian people:

Weary Russian people, in view of your suffering and torment, and outrages upon yourself and your conscience—no honest citizen who loves the truth need bear this violence any more. Seize all the power, all the land, the factories and mills. And we, the true defenders of your interests, will fight your evil enemy General Denikin, believing deeply that you do not want the landlords and capitalists to return, and that you will try, however hard it may be, you will apply all your strength to save the revolutionary front, to save the victories of the revolution.

On the red banners of the Don revolutionary corps is written: all land to the peasants, all factories and mills to the workers, all



power to the people through true councils of workers, peasants, and Cossacks' deputies, elected by the workers on the basis of free socialist agitation. Down with the autocracy of commissars, who have ruined the revolution.

I am not alone. The true spirit of the people, which has suffered for truth, is with me, which guarantees that the revolution will be saved.

ALL SO-CALLED DESERTERS join me and form that terrible force before which Denikin will quake and the Communists bow down. I call all who love truth and true freedom to the ranks of the corps.

The corps set off, planning to join up with the 23rd Division, which had been commanded by Mironov.

The hopes he had placed on the wisdom of the Communists were in vain. "People who do not know life" knew well, however, the taste of power, and they perceived in Mironov's acts only an encroachment upon their power. Smigla issued a statement in which Mironov was declared a traitor, a rebel, and an outlaw. The order to "deliver him alive or dead to the headquarters of Soviet forces," was made. In the next order Mironov was accused of being in league with Denikin. Lenin ordered Skliansky to have "Sokolnikov's godchild" caught.

The Russian people were deaf to the call of their Messiah. No one came to help him. Under the influence of Smigla's order most of his soldiers deserted the Corps. With a detachment of five hundred Mironov made his way through the forest paths, avoiding settlements. He tried to avoid fighting the Red units sent to capture him. There were only a few minor skirmishes in which ten men from both sides died. Finally on September 14 Mironov came across Budenny's cavalry corps and surrendered to him without a fight.

The non-Cossack Budenny planned to shoot the Cossack Mironov on the spot, but as bad luck would have it Trotsky was present and did not let him.

The RVSR chairman had his reasons. The political side of the matter interested him. Mironov and all of the men seized with him were sent to Balashov and handed over to a judicial investigative commission (troika) headed by D. Poluiian, a Kuban Cossack. Three days later the commission was given the powers of a tribunal.

Trotsky thought that "the trial ought to have a significant educational

meaning for the Cossacks." As his personal emissary to Balashov he appointed Smigla who oversaw the whole trial.

Trotsky was kept informed. Before Mironov had been caught, Trotsky had written an article, "Colonel Mironov," in the RVS paper, *V puti*. His sharp revolutionary eye had discerned in Mironov "personal ambition, careerism, a desire to rise up on the backs of the laboring masses," even the intention to become the Don ataman. His next article, "Lessons of the Mironov Movement," appeared when the corps commander was already in the tribunal's hands. Trotsky interpreted even the fact that the corps had surrendered without a battle in a way that reflected badly on Mironov. But we ought not to judge Lev Davidovich too severely, because as his later behavior showed he did not believe what he wrote. To a fiery Party publicist like Trotsky propaganda was more important than the truth. Because of that, the unavoidable labels were applied to Mironov. He was declared the expression of the middle Cossacks' indecision; the Mironov movement was the embodiment of the partisan movement that would have to be crushed. We must, however, give Trotsky his due: he was not bloodthirsty. Had Stalin been in his place, Mironov would have been put against the wall without delay.

The judicial procedure lasted three days. The hearings were open. The objectivity of the indictment would surprise Soviet citizens of the next generation who became used to well-organized trials. It included Mironov's appeal and his conversation with Smigla, and described accurately his behavior after his rebellion. There was not a word about an association with Denikin. His acts were considered treasonous.

Mironov admitted his guilt, most of the accused denied it. The corps commander explained his motives in great detail and asked for mercy. At his request his letter to Lenin was admitted as evidence and a number of witnesses were questioned. The court also listened to the testimony of the "Khopersk communists."

Smigla acted as prosecutor. He exercised his rather informal eloquence at some length, apparently in imitation of his patron, Trotsky. He demanded that Mironov be shot, along with every tenth commander and one of every twenty of the remaining soldiers.

Mironov had a defender, Rybakov, who portrayed Mironov as a superlative military leader and the "lion of the Revolution." (Smigla called him a drake.) Rybakov laid out his military service in detail. Mironov's only guilt was that "as a warrior of the Red Army he was a

bad politician . . . and as a warrior he was direct in his actions." Rybakov was not afraid to name the true causes of the rebellion: repression on the Don, indifference of the authorities to the fate of the Cossacks, and the silence of Lenin. He compared Mironov's acts with Trotsky's declaration "I cannot be silent!" The defender asked the court to pardon Mironov.

In his final words Mironov dwelt on what had brought him to the court. Without denying his guilt, he made reference to his political ignorance (he had not read Marx) and begged indulgence. "I ask you for probation, give me a chance to remain a revolutionary warrior and prove that I can defend Soviet power. . . ."

The sentence ordered that Mironov and another ten men from among the commanders and Communists be shot and the rest be imprisoned for various terms, to be carried out at midnight.

Sentencing occurred on October 7. But that same day, before the sentence could be carried out, the fate of the accused was determined by Trotsky in a telegram to Smigla:

The report on Mironov's trial leads me to think that we ought to provide a lenient sentence. In view of Mironov's behavior, I think that such a decision would be expedient. The slowness of our advance on the Don necessitates that we increase our political influence among the Cossacks with the purpose of causing a schism. For that mission we might, perhaps, be able to use Mironov, by bringing him to Moscow after sentencing, pardoning him through the *TSIK* with the obligation of working in the rear area to cause an uprising. . . .

All this, we hope, is clear. It was expedient to use Mironov to cause a schism among the Cossacks. This was a high-stakes game involving the fates of people, the country, the Revolution, and the court, which like the *VTsik*, are simply instruments in the game, like hockey sticks.

Smigla heeded his boss's wishes. The next day the court sent to Moscow a petition to pardon the prisoners. They had already taken from the prisoners their "word of honor to serve Soviet power and the Revolution honestly in the future." The spectacle had turned out well. The educational purpose had been achieved.

The long hours and days of waiting to be executed cost Mironov and his comrades dearly. Mironov described this period two weeks later when he was in Moscow. The convicts, at their request, were put



together in a single room where they sang, wrote letters, and talked: "death in battle is not frightening: one moment . . . and it is all over. But the consciousness of close, inevitable death is horrifying, when there is no hope, when you know that nothing can halt the approaching grave, when until the frightful moment there remains less and less time, and finally when they say to you, 'your pit is ready.'"

Even the hardy Communist Smigla, who did not recognize the existence of the soul, was touched by the appearance of Mironov. He wrote that "Mironov aged overnight. When I told him that I would petition about a pardon, the *old man* [The commander was forty-seven, Smigla was twenty years younger] broke down and sobbed. It was easier for the old soldier to part with life than to return to it." Did Smigla recall that while he was waiting to be shot in 1937?

The VTSIK's pardon was issued on October 8, but the prisoners were told of it four days later. Mironov wrote an application for Party membership.

On the tenth Trotsky devised a new plan by which the Cossacks would become "autonomous." He said: "The Cossacks are deserting Denikin altogether. Appropriate guarantees must be established that Denikin might be replaced by Mironov and his comrades, who will have to go to the heart of the Don." The plan did not find support—because of the "autonomy," which seemed excessive even in quotation marks.

Mironov and his men were sent to Moscow under guard, where a commission under Dzerzhinsky looked them over. The impression was favorable. On October 23 the Politburo ordered that they all be pardoned and sent to the Army. Mironov was treated separately. He was accepted into the Party on the standard basis and put on the staff of the Don Executive Committee. Opinions differed on how he was to be used. Lenin and Kamenev supported the idea of the Don Executive Committee, Krestinsky favored a command, Kalinin abstained. (Good old Mikhail Ivanovich wanted to avoid responsibility; he later refrained from helping Mironov in a time of mortal danger.) Because the majority was so small it was decided to get the opinion of Trotsky, who was absent. And what do you think? L. D. said that Colonel Mironov, the careerist, the Denikinist, and the Cossack ataman, should be sent to the Southwest Front in a command position. Nothing came of this, however, mainly because Mironov was at the limit of his strength.

He wrote an appeal to the Don Cossacks, which was approved by the



TSK; then he went to Nizhni Novgorod to see his wife. On the way he contracted typhus and was hospitalized. In early December he returned to Moscow, where he met with Lenin and Dzerzhinsky.

On the Don, Mironov found another policy pursued by the Soviet authorities. A sea of spilt blood and failures on the Denikin front had convinced Moscow that they could not fight their own population with impunity. It would be better to attract them to the Soviet side, especially the Cossacks, who were so valuable to the Army. In September 1919 Trotsky formulated "Guiding Principles of Current Policy on the Don," which was the basis of the TSK's thesis "On Work on the Don." Now—temporarily, of course—the approach to the Cossacks would be determined, not by class principles but by their relations with the Red Army. The troops and organs of power were instructed not to commit violence and to pay in time and in full for all items of supply.

Everything is better understood by comparison, even misfortune. After the shootings and requisitions of 1919 the "surplus appropriation system" of 1920, which was none too gentle, did not seem all that bad to the Cossacks.

Mironov became head of the land section of the Don Executive Committee. It was a familiar matter, but life in the rear oppressed him. All his thoughts were directed toward the front. Mironov wrote a few appeals to Cossacks serving with Wrangel.

In July 1920 the Second Horse Army was formed on the Wrangel Front under the command of Budenny's divisional commander O. I. Gorodovikov. In their first battles they experienced defeats. Then they remembered about that useful man Mironov. On August 30 the RVS of the Republic at the request of the Southwest Front (Egorov, Stalin) appointed F. K. Mironov commander of the Second Horse Army.

Mironov practically flew to Tavria, where he found the Army in rather bad condition: badly shrunken units, a half-literate command staff, only 2,760 horsemen, 130 machine guns, and 19 artillery pieces. Mironov worked nonstop. Along with reinforcements sent by the Army, numerous volunteers from the Don joined him. By the end of September he already had 6,228 horsemen.

An independent Southern Front, under the command of M. V. Frunze with RVS member S. I. Gusev, was formed on September 20 to fight Wrangel. Poluian, former chairman of the Balashov tribunal, was put on the Second Horse Army's RVS. Mironov took these Jesuitical insults badly. Frunze and Gusev sent a telegram of protest to Moscow,

but they were unable to change anything. Apparently someone in the center had decided that Poluiian would be a good watchdog and at the same time a live warning to the commander.

On October 8 Wrangel's shock units began the trans-Dnepr operation to consolidate their hold on the right bank. The Second Horse Army stood in their way. The Whites took Nikopol but were unable to get any farther. At the cost of huge losses the Second Horse destroyed some crack White units (Barbovich's corps, Markov's and Kornilov's divisions, and Babiev's cavalry) and drove them back across the Dnepr. The might of Wrangel's army was sapped, its spirit broken, its death agony begun. At the height of the battle Mironov himself led his cavalry in attack. His horse was shot out from under him.

Distrust of Mironov showed through occasionally nonetheless. During the battles in northern Tavria the commander-in-chief, and later Voroshilov and Budenny, tried to join the Second Horse Army to the First. Frunze put a stop to their attempts.

The success of the Second Horse Army undermined Voroshilov's and Budenny's dominance in the cavalry. Moreover, Frunze, who was one of the most authoritative and independent Red Army leaders, did not particularly like the commanders of the First Horse. When they received transfer orders from the Polish Front, Voroshilov and Budenny tried to have themselves subordinated to the commander-in-chief instead of to the front. Lenin and S. S. Kamenev rejected the attempt. Upon their arrival in Tavria, which was much delayed (we have discussed the reasons), the Horse Army rvs tried again to impose their conditions and put forward their own plan for taking the Crimea. The commander-in-chief did not bother to look it over. As a result, during the attack on the peninsula Frunze preferred to keep the First Horse in reserve and entered the fray only on the sixth day.

We refrain from describing the combat in the Crimea. That has been done well enough in Dushenkin's book. It is interesting to note, however, that Makhno's Insurgency Army, which fought against Wrangel on the side of the Reds, was also subordinated to Mironov. Mironov was not afraid to take the Guliai-Pole anarchists under his command. He used them brilliantly in the decisive battle on Litovsk peninsula when Frunze's forces, which had broken through onto the Crimea, were almost driven into the sea by the White's desperate counterattack. This is how Mironov described the events of November 11:

The 52nd and 15th Rifle Divisions were overrun by the Whites and retreated in disorder. General Barbovich's cavalry, and Drozdov's and Kornilov's cavalry units, which were mostly composed of crack officer units for whom there was nothing left to do but die, broke through to the north and threatened to break into the rear of the 6th Army. Hard after the retreating Red Armymen galloped the White cavalry with blades bared, sweeping the retreating Red Armymen from their path with wild yells and whistles. Head-on into the brutish band appeared the lava flow of the 16th and 2nd Cavalry Divisions; the correlation of forces was one to three. The lava flows neared one another. Cries of "hurrah" drowned out the machine-gun fire and the explosion of shells. Now only a thousand paces, seven hundred, five hundred. Sabers clashed. Suddenly the 2nd Horse units galloped aside, and 250 machine guns brought up on carts behind the Red cavalry opened up on the enemy a deadly automatic fire. Horses and men rolled on the ground. The first ranks were wiped out, the rear turned back and in their turn fell under the rifle and machine-gun fire of the 51st Rifle Division [Blokher's]. The enemy fled in panic.

On the machine-gun carts sat *Makhno's men*. The songwriters later always forgot that the "*tachanka*"—a light carriage with a machine gun—was first used by Nestor Makhno and was his main weapon.

The Whites raced into the depths of the Crimea. That same day Frunze offered Wrangel a truce, guaranteeing those who surrendered their lives and a chance to leave the country. The next day Lenin reprimanded the front commander for his liberalism, but more about that later.

On the evening of the eleventh, Mironov and Makhno finished off Barbovich and occupied Voinka Station. On the twelfth they were in Dzhankoi and a day later in Simferopol. The First Horse followed after, staying a day's march behind.

The campaign was over. Wrangel did not reply to Frunze's offer, but on November 13 he disbanded his army, leaving everyone to his own fate.

Mironov was at the zenith of military glory. The decisive contribution of the Second Horse Army to the conquest of the Crimea was acknowledged by all. Mironov was decorated with Honorary Revolutionary Arms (a sword with a gilt hilt and overlaid with an Order of the



Red Banner) and then, along with two hundred soldiers of the Second Horse, with an Order of the Red Banner. This was his first decoration: at Tsaritsyn he had only been recommended for one, but for some unknown reason the award had not been made.

The war ended, and the Second Horse Army was made into the 2nd Horse Corps. But the struggle continued. On November 23 Frunze gave an ultimatum to Makhno, who during the Crimean campaign had remained in Guliai-Pole with a large force, to disband all of his detachments. Makhno did not capitulate and was declared an enemy of Soviet power. Mironov was unwillingly thrown into the fray. These punitive functions were like a sharp knife in his heart. He read Frunze's orders to his men, but he also ordered them to avoid a clash. At the same time he requested that Moscow recall him: he did not want to fight against his recent comrade-in-arms. The center agreed that it would be best to transfer Mironov to other duties, but he was to remain in his position until a new commander arrived. The Horse Corps wandered about the southern Ukraine for more than a month, reluctantly pursuing the elusive Makhno. Finally they were transferred to the Caucasus Front (Likhaia Station). Only in January 1921 did Mironov receive his new appointment: as assistant commander-in-chief (chief inspector) of cavalry.

The last act of Mironov's tragedy had begun. Having turned his command over to N.D. Tomin, he left Usmanskaia Station for Moscow on January 30. The hero was given special accommodations: a Pullman car for himself, his wife, two orderlies, and a cook; and a heated car for two horses and a machine-gun cart. He traveled without a guard unit. What would he need the guards for when at practically every station he was met triumphantly by crowds, orchestras, official greetings?

After the festive ceremony at Rostov, Smigla visited Mironov's car. The conversation was friendly, and the frightful days of the Balashov trial could be recalled with humor. But Mironov may have forgiven and forgotten too soon. The Cheka, as is expected of it, was wide awake. The situation on the Don was not at all good. The "surplus appropriation system" was bleeding the Cossacks dry and turning them once again against the authorities. It was much the same throughout rural Russia. The politically unsophisticated muzhiks did not want to give away all of the grain they had raised for some ideal that they did not yet understand. The demobilized Red Army men returned to their homes;



and when their grain was taken, they got no discount. Peasant riots and uprisings broke out all over the country. At first the Soviet authorities did not take them very seriously. It was early February, and the chairman of the VTSIK, Kalinin, was in the Kuban. A local worker complained to him, "It's bad, they take the appropriations from us at the point of a gun. They come, and they take everything. The old women beg them to at least leave something for the *children* or for the horses, but they only shout, 'Take it all.' And they really do take *everything*, they don't leave anything. . . ." Kalinin, the muzhik from Tver, replied:

*Of all people* we must not offend the Cossacks. They are a warlike people, they will start an uprising, there will be disorder. But as much as it might like to, the government cannot do *anything differently*, because it would be criminal if in one part of the state the people had more than enough to eat while in another they were literally starving. The government must take the *last gible*t from the peasant who has and can give for those who are starving . . . [our emphasis].

Well, who would have thought, what an imp, excuse me, a dialectician. Of all people not to offend and take to the last gible. Somewhere there is famine; therefore we will take everything from you. What those people would eat, all of whose grain was taken, Mikhail Ivanovich was not prepared to discuss at this historical stage.

The Cossacks for the umpteenth time found their treatment unreasonable and took to their guns. Vakulin, a former regimental commander of the 23rd "Mironov" division, rebelled in the northern Don Territory and in early February 1921 occupied Kamyshin. In his proclamations he promised the Cossacks the support of the Tambov leader Antonov, as well as of Mironov and Budenny. The 2nd Horse Corps, now without Mironov, was sent to put the rebellion down.

In these extremely tense circumstances Mironov decided to visit his native territory on his way from Rostov to Moscow. In a word: "In Europe it is cold, in Italy it is warm. Power is as repulsive as the hands of the barber." Mironov's visit was not welcomed by the Don Cheka and its head, Burov. Dispatches flew on ahead of the army commander with directions to redouble vigilance and to take measures.

Immediately upon his arrival at Ust-Medveditsky Mironov spoke at a large meeting that had been called by the revolutionary committee. He called upon the Cossacks to preserve the peace and promised to help

correct the mistakes of the local authorities. The village Party organization delegated him to a regional conference, which was to open in Mikhailovka village where Vakulin—who, by the way, held an Order of the Red Banner—had recently raised his rebellion. Mironov was in a hurry to get to Moscow, but allowed himself to be persuaded by his fellow villagers.

The next day a group of his comrades from the 23rd Division gathered around him. Among them was a certain Skobinenko, a “surplus” appropriator, who was also a civilian informer for the Cheka. Skobinenko’s assignment for the Cheka was to lead the discussion to abuses of the local authorities. Mironov spoke candidly. In his opinion, the continuation of grain requisitioning would cause new rebellions by spring. Before they broke up, the men present at the meeting agreed to send coded messages to Mironov in Moscow to keep him informed of events on the Don. The material on Mironov was ready; what came later would only add to it.

At the conference Mironov attacked the local Cheka by speaking openly of the disorders they had caused. He asked that they permit private trade and that they replace expropriations by a direct tax, in a word, put an end to “War Communism.” These heretical demands horrified the local commissars. They dispersed the conference and put Mironov under arrest.

Similar heresies were being discussed at the time in the Politburo. On February 16 they decided to publish an article for discussion on a tax in kind. But what is permitted to Jupiter would land the bull in Lubianka. Mironov’s wife and several of the conference participants were also arrested. Skliansky informed Lenin that Mironov was under arrest by the local Cheka charged with attempting to incite rebellion. That much is documented; Lenin’s reaction is unknown.

The Kremlin leaders had all they could handle at the time: peasant rebellions, the Kronshtadt mutiny, and in the Party the discussion on trade unions and the Tenth Congress (March 8–16). After the sounds of the Congress’s debates had died away, after expropriation was replaced by a tax in kind, and after the Kronshtadt sailors had been suppressed, Mironov still sat in jail. True, he was not in the Lubianka, but in the Butyrka.

We ought not to judge the All-Russian Cheka (VCheka) chairman Dzerzhinsky too harshly. To his other difficult duties the Party had added the post of People’s Commissar of Transportation. Returning

from Kronshtadt, Feliks suddenly ordered that Mironov and his comrades be quickly brought to Moscow. In the complex Lubianka organization it was not easy to find a man.

March drew to a close, but still the Mironov matter was not settled. An unhurried investigation was under way. In the middle of the month he declared a hunger strike—in vain. Several times during walks he met his wife, who was also being held there. The regime, apparently, was not yet well established. They gave Mironov newspapers, even a pen and paper. Having lost hope, on March 30 he wrote a last confession:

A Party letter. To Chairman of the VTSIK Citizen M. I. Kalinin.  
Copies: Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars V. I. Ulianov.  
Chairman of the RVS of the Republic L. D. Trotsky.  
Chairman of the TSK RKP L. B. Kamenev. . . .

It was a long letter. Mironov rejected the charges against him and discussed the provocation of the Don Cheka. He asked, Why am I in prison? Because I was ready to lead Red forces on Bucharest, Budapest, and so forth? Because I protested against the abuses and mistakes that the Party and its leaders have admitted, and demanded the establishment of a tax that has now been introduced by law?

People in general, and I all the more, do not lie in the face of death, for I have not lost faith in my God, who is embodied in conscience. As I have always done all my life with friends and enemies alike. . . . I repeat, that is my God, and I have not and I will not cease to pray to him as long as there is a soul in my frail body. . . . And if you, Mikhail Ivanovich, remain deaf until April 15, 1921, I will die of starvation in prison. . . . I do not want to admit the thought that the Soviet authorities on the basis of false and unfounded denunciations would guillotine one of their best fighters, "the valiant commander of the 2nd Horse Army" (RVS order of 4/12/20). . . . Let there not be this shameful page to gladden Generals Krasnov and Wrangel, who were beaten by me. . . . I remain with deep faith in the truth. Former Army Commander of the 2nd Horse Army, Communist F. K. Mironov.

Mikhail Ivanovich remained deaf. Nor did the other chairmen raise their voices. But Mironov had hope. On the day he sent the letter he

made plans to see his wife on April 2, thinking that by that time he would have an answer. But something else happened that day. All of the prisoners' walks were cancelled. Except Mironov's. He was led out to walk in the stone enclosure of the inner yard. The guard shot once. . . . That is how, many years later, one of the wardens of Butyrka tells it.

Once again we are told with regret that Mironov's letter did not reach the addressee. Or rather, not quite that way. Comrade Kalinin did read it, but it was too late. Recall that Lenin's telegram pardoning N. Gumilev also arrived late. "It is too late," said Lafayette to the king's messengers. "What can we do? We will believe . . . in good intentions."

The Mironov case with all its documents has survived. There is a card on which is written in pencil in an unknown hand, "Shot by a decision of the VCheka collegium 2 April 1921." The others arrested in connection with the Mironov case were held a while longer in prison and then released without trial. His wife was also freed. In 1922 Kalinin summoned her. Their conversation was long, but not a word was said about Mironov's death. The all-union elder had showed he had a heart; he gave orders to give her a pass to Mineralnye Vody spa in the Caucasus. In 1924 the People's Commissariat for Army and Navy established a personal pension for her.

After that it was as if Mironov had been forgotten. True, Smigla mentioned him not unkindly in his memoirs in the 1920s. Then silence fell. Mironov does not figure in the encyclopedias and books on the history of the Civil War. From 1937 on he became a traitor and rebel. Mironov's military accomplishments were transferred to Budenny, and partially to Gorodovikov.

We do not know who ordered Mironov killed. Possibly the authorities tired of bothering with the refractory Cossack, especially after the war was over. Maybe the Kronshtadt mutiny decided his fate: he could be seen as the center of future insurrections. It is also very likely that some personal scores were being settled—maybe by someone of those who would have served under the new inspector of cavalry. (Two years later Budenny was assigned to that post.)

It is more than likely that Kalinin read the letter in time. But it would not have been like him to intervene for a prisoner before the fearsome Cheka. Who has forgotten how after the pardon in 1919 he washed his hands of it in the Politburo?

In 1956, during the revelations and rehabilitations, in the torrent of



crocodile tears for the millions of innocent victims, Mironov was remembered also. For four years the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court batted the case back and forth until they came to the portentous conclusion: "Abrogate the order of the Presidium of the VCheka of April 2, 1921, in regard to F. K. Mironov and dismiss the case for lack of criminality in his actions."

That was it. They abrogated an order that had not been. We therefore did not learn who was guilty of Mironov's death. However, those who had his death on their hands responded quickly. In 1961, twenty-five former commanders and political workers of the First Horse Army sent an angry letter to the TSK demanding that the Military Collegium's decision be laid aside. There was no answer.

The case of the most famous cavalryman was still not reconciled. In 1966 a display was erected at the Central Museum of the Soviet Army, dedicated to the Second Horse and Mironov. Budenny was invited to the opening. When he saw the photograph of Mironov, the marshal reddened and stamped his feet. Some feared for his health. The museum workers found a Solomonic solution. Mironov was replaced by Gorodovikov. Budenny gradually calmed down. After his departure the display was restored to its former appearance. But every time the marshal visited, Mironov's portrait had to be removed.

Mironov stands by himself among the great Red military leaders. The others, whatever their pasts might have been, were servants of the new authorities. Mironov, while a soldier, remained a revolutionary. He understood revolution as the free creativity of the people creating new ways of life for themselves.

For others the Revolution ended with the seizure of power and the formation of a new national leadership. For Mironov, on the other hand, that was only the beginning. It was his conviction that only the people could determine their future, determine it according to their own understanding and not at the instruction of people "distant from life." And they do it for themselves without sacrificing the living to Party dogma for the doubtful sake of future generations. Mironov wanted freedom and justice for the people in his own day. He firmly believed that they needed it as much as their descendants. Only the people were sovereign, not the commissars, the Cheka, the TSK or SNK.

Having come to power as a result of the October coup, the new state-political leadership usurped the governing powers of the Russian people. All decisions of the TSK came to be passed off as the will of the

Revolution. This form of government took the name dictatorship of the proletariat. Everyone understood, of course, that the dictatorship was run not by the working class, which was still laughably small—1.5 to 2 million in a population of 150 million—but by the Communist Party, or more precisely by the Party elite, who were actually beyond any other control and were irremovable.

The higher Red Army commanders were, with few exceptions, officers of the old Army.<sup>7</sup> Nicholas II's abdication freed them from their former oaths. They swore loyalty to the new authorities and served them faithfully. Any directive, any order from above was obligatory for them regardless of its purpose or content. Nor were the Communists in the best of positions. Their revolutionary consciousness was not free, but subordinate to the will of the tsar. Every decision of the Party leadership had to be carried out, or one ceased to be a member of the Party. It is hard to imagine that every Bolshevik, and they numbered in the hundreds of thousands, agreed with the destruction of the Cossacks; but practically all who were ordered to do so put the savage directive of January 29 into effect.

If the Communists were deprived of free will, what might be said of the officers over whom hung the damnation of unclean birth and past service? Only unquestioning obedience gave them any sort of guarantee for their lives; otherwise they risked being accused of treason and shot. This is not to speak of the officers who were killed for no reason at all, for example those who were drowned in the Volga at Stalin and Voroshilov's orders. They all weigh on the conscience regardless of their background. The former landlord and lieutenant Tukhachevsky skillfully commanded the suppression of the Kronshtadt mutiny, after which he was sent to suppress the Tambov peasants. Yakir, the school dropout from a poor Jewish family, not only directed mass executions but created a program of genocide that such masters of that sort of business as Hitler, Goebbels, and Rosenberg would have signed with both hands.<sup>8</sup>

Mironov cannot be cast in the role of suppressor. He fought according to the dictates of his conscience and wanted to fight only those whom he considered enemies of freedom. He was opposed to shooting peaceful villagers, prisoners, and even rebels. Because of that he fought passionately against de-Cossackization and the slaughter of peasants. He, therefore, did not want to fight Makhno's Insurgency Army. Mironov knew that he was being sent against Makhno, with

whom he had recently fought on the same side, not because of pillaging, but because he would not submit to Moscow's will. To be sure, Makhno's boys liked to indulge themselves at others' expense, but such sins were more than sufficient on the Red Armymen's side.

Mironov was in some ways like Makhno and Antonov, who, whatever the official historians might say of them, were ideological fighters. These men believed that they had the right to their own understanding of freedom, not coordinated with the Kremlin, and they fought for that freedom.

A folk *intelligent*, a born commander, a true individual, a philanthropist, and truthseeker, Mironov was doomed, as was everyone who did not care to or could not become an industrious cog in the new governmental machine. It would not mean much to say that he would not have lived past 1937. We cannot imagine him commissar-obedient after war's end in either the Army or civil service. Mironov was killed by personal enemies, but had their attempt been unsuccessful some other conflict with the authorities would have awaited him. It would have come soon and undoubtedly would have been fatal.

It is deeply symbolic that during the Civil War Mironov was forgiven for independence and even rebellion, but that he was dealt with in the first days of victory. The new authorities, who called themselves revolutionary, needed a strong Army, which they called the defense of the Revolution. But for the lion of the Revolution, Mironov, and other real revolutionaries, as distinct from tame revolutionaries, there was no longer room—not in this Army, not in this life.

The Red Army's victory over Wrangel concluded the larger Civil War in European Russia. For two more years campaigns were waged in Central Asia and in the Far East, which resulted in the conquest of those outposts of the former empire. During that time the Army found a new occupation, which did not bring it martial glory, but which was vitally important for the new state. In this little Civil War the RKKA finished off the partisan movements, which for propaganda purposes were called bandit gangs; the leaders of the partisans included their recent ally Makhno, the Polish mercenary Tiutiunnik, and many others. In 1921 the mailed fist of the Army crushed two other popular uprisings: the soldiers and sailors at Kronshtadt, and the peasants at Tambov. These episodes of the Army's history deserve special attention for several reasons, not the least of which is that in both cases the Red forces were commanded by Mikhail Tukhachevsky.

On the basis of a false historical analogy one might assume that the victorious side in a civil war might display magnanimity—or at least mercy—to the defeated enemy. It would seem there could not be a better way to quickly heal the open wounds of the recent slaughter, to erase the bloody memories from the national memory, to douse the violent flames of hatred and brutality. As much as or more than its daily bread, the country needed a national reconciliation, which alone could ensure a peaceful future. The Americans took that path after their bitter Civil War, but in Russia things went differently.

In 1921, when most of the country was free of civil war, the regime became harsher. It was a direct result of the victory. The Bolshevik leaders felt that at last there was no power capable of quickly overthrowing them, either in the country nor beyond its borders. Therefore they began to consolidate their authority. It is not contradictory that the New Economic Policy was proclaimed that same year. NEP was only a tactical maneuver in the economic sphere, a forced retreat in the face of famine and growing popular dissatisfaction, mostly on the part of the peasants. Trotsky, by the way, had suggested ending the direct ex-



propriation of grain from the peasantry as early as February 1920.

Political authority became openly totalitarian. Extraordinary powers that had earlier been justified by wartime conditions now became normal. The pervasive punitive apparatus and its product, the Gulag, grew stronger. The limitations on civil rights lost their temporary character and became more widespread and more severe. The last non-Bolshevik organs of the press were closed, and censorship was made stringent. The Orthodox Church, whose congregation had until recently comprised the majority of the Russian population, was dealt a mortal blow. Other religious sects did not fare better. All political parties except the Bolsheviks were utterly liquidated. The Communists thus achieved a monopoly on ideology and political activity.

In the Bolshevik Party itself an Arakcheevan<sup>1</sup> regime was more and more tightly imposed, rooting out the weak shoots of inner-party democracy in the form of factions and groups. Lenin's infamous resolution "On Party Unity" was enacted immediately after the Civil War. During the mortal struggle for the existence of the Party and its power it had been all right to dispute and to insist on one's own point of view, but when that battle had been won, such freedom became an unallowable luxury. One ought not take literally Lenin's argument that the more or less open debate about trade unions had made the Party vulnerable to criticism by the petite bourgeoisie and had brought the Party to the brink of catastrophe.<sup>2</sup> The leadership that realized its power over the country through the Party considered this a suitable moment to strengthen its dominant position. The clash of opinions expressed in bitter polemics and conflicting resolutions at annual conferences had undermined the authority of the top leaders and interfered with truly scientific leadership. Compulsory unity, reminiscent of the inviolability of church dogma, opened the way to the absolute power of the apparatus—and to the dictatorship of Stalin.

Total cruelty as a form of government policy was given clear expression in the fall of 1920. When it became clear that the Reds would win the Crimean campaign, Frunze gave in to unforgiveable weakness and attempted to avoid unnecessary bloodshed. On November 11 he addressed the commander of the White forces:

In view of the uselessness of further resistance by your troops, which threatens only to shed superfluous streams of blood, I suggest you cease your resistance and surrender with all of the

forces of your army and navy, military reserves, supplies, arms, and all other military goods.

In the case that you accept this offer, the Revolutionary Military Council of the armies of the Southern Front—on the basis of the powers bestowed upon it by the central Soviet authority—guarantees the surrendering forces, including its highest commanders, full pardon for all their offenses connected with the Civil War. All of those who choose not to remain and work in socialist Russia will be given an opportunity to emigrate without hindrance on the condition that they promise to refrain from waging further war against workers'-peasants' Russia and Soviet authority. I expect a reply before 2400 hours on November 11.

Moral responsibility for all possible consequences of refusing this honorable offer lies on you. . . .

This appeal was broadcast by radio. At the same time the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front (M. Frunze, I. Smigla, B. Kun, M. Vladimirov) addressed the following appeal, also by radio, "to the officers, soldiers, Cossacks, and sailors of Wrangel's army":

We do not seek revenge. All who lay down their arms will be given the chance to expiate their guilt before the people by honest labor. If Wrangel rejects our offer, you are obliged to lay down your arms against his will. . . .

At this same time we are issuing an order to Soviet troops about chivalrous behavior toward those who surrender and the merciless extermination of those who raise arms against the Red Army.

The next day Lenin dressed his commander down in a telegram, reminding him that he was "endowed with powers by the central Soviet authority": "I have just learned of your offer to Wrangel to surrender. I am extremely surprised by the excessive leniency of your conditions. If the enemy accepts them, you will have to expedite the seizure of the fleet to ensure that not one ship is permitted to escape; if the enemy does not accept these terms, you must not repeat them and must deal with the enemy mercilessly."<sup>3</sup>

Frunze's appeal went unanswered, which did not save him from having to do Party penance. Wrangel preferred flight to capitulation. He managed to escape by sea with 83,000 others, military personnel

and refugees. Tens of thousands more remained on the Crimea—peaceful citizens from all over Russia and rear-guard units covering the flight of the White Army. Soviet sources say nothing about prisoners, as if there were none. Only in the unpublished memoirs of F. Mironov do we find that the Second Horse Army took 25,000 prisoners. Maiakovsky has the following lines in his poem “Khorosho” (1927):

“Wrangel is driven into the sea. No prisoners. An end—  
for the time being. . . .”<sup>4</sup>

No prisoners. It is quite possible that the poet knew what that meant. P. I. Lavut, who organized his public readings, was an eyewitness to the events on the Crimea. That is mentioned in the poem.

Captured officers of Wrangel’s army were shot. So were many other soldiers and refugees. Some who escaped captivity in mid-November fled to the mountains and joined the Green partisan units. They could not escape the Crimea. The entire shoreline and the narrow isthmus to the mainland were controlled by the Reds. After several months of pursuing them, the Soviet authorities in the Crimea called upon them to lay down their arms and save their lives. Many did surrender, and all of them were shot.

We know practically no details of this action. One eyewitness claimed that 80,000 were shot.<sup>5</sup> The fiery revolutionaries, Rozaliia Zemliachka and Bela Kun, members of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front, were in charge of the operation.<sup>6</sup> There is no information about Frunze’s participation. The role of the leaders in Moscow is also unknown. Bela Kun was removed from the Crimea with a reprimand, but that happened in 1922.

If Wrangel was a strong military enemy, the Kronshtadt rebellion posed a different sort of danger—political. The sailors’ slogan “Soviets without Bolsheviks” threatened to isolate the Bolsheviks from the population; it deprived them of their appropriated monopoly on revolutionary behavior. Lenin and his party could not discard the slogan “Power to the people.” Without that they would be as superfluous as the Constituent Assembly, which they had disbanded. The Red Army men, most of them peasants, had fought not for the Bolsheviks but for the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies, in which they saw their own power.<sup>7</sup> The destruction of the tender shoots of democracy, the suppression and liquidation of other political parties, occurred behind the back of the populace and without publicity. If all of Russia would draw the conclusions to which the Petrograd workers and Kronshtadt sailors had come,



the Bolsheviks would not have been able to retain control of the Red Army—the shield and sword of Bolshevik power.

The conclusions drawn by the revolutionary class in the cradle of the Revolution were discomfiting for Lenin and his colleagues. The true proletariat decided to fight a third revolution against famine and the violence of the Cheka and the bureaucrats. In February 1921 Petrograd was paralyzed by strikes (those holding power preferred to call them slowdowns). A proclamation dated February 27 stated: “Workers and peasants need freedom. They do not wish to live by Bolshevik fiat. They want to determine their own fate. Comrades, preserve revolutionary order. Organize and insistently demand: the liberation of all arrested socialists and unaffiliated workers; the lifting of martial law, freedom of expression, of the press, and of association for all workers; free re-election of factory committees, professional unions and soviets.”

The next day in the Nevsky region the following appeal was pasted to walls: “We know who fears the Constituent Assembly. It is those who will no longer be able to steal, who will have to answer to the national delegates for deceit, for theft, for all crimes.”

The fall of Bolshevik authority in Kronshtadt occurred suspiciously easily. Only a third of the Communists opposed the rebellion, another third joined it, and the remaining third waited passively to see what would happen. The rebels published a new paper, *News (Izvestiia) of the provisional revolutionary committee of sailors, soldiers and workers.*” Here are a few excerpts from it:

What is happening now was caused by the Communists themselves, by their bloody, destructive work. Letters from the villages are full of complaints and damnation of the Communists. . . .

The peasant was right who said at the Eighth Soviet Congress: “Everything is all right except . . . the land is ours, but the grain is yours; the water is ours, but the fish are yours; the forests are ours, but the wood is yours. . . .” They shout from the bloody stage, all land to the peasants, factories to the workers. The Communists . . . have sat on the neck of the poorest peasant more firmly than the landlords. . . .<sup>8</sup>

Words were not enough to answer such pronouncements. The answer was written with the bullets and bayonets of the Red Army. The Army marched to suppress peasants and workers, their class brothers, who wanted only a better, freer life. The majority of those storming Kron-



shtadt had exactly the same reasons for dissatisfaction as the rebels.

After the failure of the assault on March 8, the most powerful leaders of the Army were brought to Petrograd: Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council Trotsky, Chairman of the Cheka Dzerzhinsky, Commander-in-Chief Kamenev, Commander of the Western Front Tukhachevsky. The latter was temporarily put in charge of the 7th Army, which was reinforced by elite battalions of Red cadets. The first assault was timed to coincide with the opening of the Tenth Party Congress. When it failed, a large detachment of political commissars was sent directly from the meeting. There were 300 delegates, 140 of whom had voting rights, including Voroshilov, Bubnov, Dybenko, and S. Uritsky.

Tukhachevsky approached his task according to all of the rules of military art. He directed the attack from where the besieged defenders would least expect it, from the side of the Finnish Gulf on which the ice had begun to melt. It was risky, but the assaulting troops even dragged artillery across the ice. On March 16 the Party Congress was closed ahead of schedule because of unrest in the provinces. On the seventeenth Soviet troops, in white camouflage cloaks, advanced across the shaky ice to Kronshtadt. They quickly broke into the fortress, and all resistance soon stopped. The ships of the Baltic Fleet also surrendered. The leaders of the rebellion, including the commandant of the fortress, former General Kozlovsky, and the chairman of the revolutionary committee, the sailor Petrechenko, escaped to Finland.

At this point Soviet authors usually end their work. In only one instance has anyone described the losses. S. Uritsky, in the first volume of the fundamental work, *The Civil War 1918–1921*, fixed the casualties as follows: The Reds lost 700 killed and 2,500 wounded and shocked; the Whites, that is the rebels, suffered 600 killed, 100 wounded.<sup>9</sup>

No one has anything to say about what happened to those who were captured. Moreover, in the academic and naturally objective research of S. Semanov there is an interesting note:

While I was working on this monograph, I was able to converse with participants of the Kronshtadt mutiny. Altogether, I was able to find five. Several of them granted interviews but asked that I not use their *materials*. We will note only that *they* unanimously affirmed that *only* the *leaders* of the mutiny and *officers* who

actively participated in it suffered *repression*. Workers, peasants, and sailors, who surrendered in Kronshtadt were demobilized or transferred to other fleets and units.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, only five could be found, and not all of them (how many: two, one?) would speak with an honest historian. Not one would permit what he had said to be used, although they unanimously agreed that nothing untoward had happened. We will note only the following:

Breathing hard from the effort, poor Semanov contradicted both logic and Russian grammar in the preceding quotation, all to keep from saying too much. In another place in the same work, the thought he tried to hide shows through. On the one hand, there were no Bolshevik atrocities; on the other, had there been, Russian émigrés and western anti-Soviet writers would surely exaggerate them.

The matter is simple to explain. Those who fled were not able to see anything. Those who remained and lived knew something that even fifty years later they were reluctant to tell. Most of the rebels immediately lost the ability to speak.

Here is what I. Ts., a military engineer who commanded a battalion of cadets in the assault, had to say. After the surrender his battalion, comprised of three companies, was marching in formation along a narrow street in the fortress when all of a sudden the rear company was opened up on in cross fire at close range from basements. The company was almost wiped out. The maddened cadets surrounded the block and indiscriminately bayoneted all males "taller than the belt of an adult man." Revenge was not taken on the ambushers, according to I. Ts., because they apparently managed to escape (they had fired at the back of the last company). We will not trouble ourselves to judge who was more humane, or inhumane, the cadets or the mutineers firing from ambush.

Tukhachevsky was outraged. The battalion was declared a penal unit and deprived of the decorations that were given by the handful to the other assault troops—in Petrograd district alone 350 were awarded. Their punishment did not end there. Along with other soldiers who had looted and raped, the cadets were ordered to execute the captured sailors. They drove the sailors out onto the cracking ice of the Gulf and shot them. Thus 7,500 men died. The whole mutinous garrison had numbered 12,000. Several of the cadets went out of their minds lying behind their machine guns. March came, the ice

soon melted, and the bodies of the sailors slipped beneath the water.

We do not know whether Tukhachevsky had anything to do with executions personally. Two months later, after a personal audience with Lenin, he was put in charge of special troops in Tambov province, detailed to suppress a peasant rebellion.

The Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs), who had much more support than the Bolsheviks among the peasants, had the upper hand in Tambov. The Bolsheviks held on there after October only by the force of arms. Late in 1917 the provincial Congress of Soviets had elected an all-SR executive committee; but now, for the good of the working people, it would have to be disbanded. Still many of the local workers considered themselves SRs. Evforitsky, the chairman of the provincial Soviet of People's Commissars was an SR; his comrade Bulatov headed the provincial militia.

At first the SRs refrained from active opposition to central Soviet authority. In 1918 they even supported the committees of poor peasants. That was probably an effect of their battle with the White Czechs and because pressure from the populace was weak. From the beginning, however, the SRs were their own men. For example, in Nakhatny Ugol they formed a model SR commune whose members worked the land and learned military skills. When grain requisitioning units came through the villages in 1920 after the Civil War had ended in the region, the peasants rose up in rebellion. Aleksander Antonov became their leader.

The son of a metal worker, Antonov had joined the SR Party in 1905, and before the February Revolution (1917) he had spent a long time in exile. His assistant, Ishin, had a similar biography. After October Antonov was sent from Tambov to Kirsanov as head of a county (*uezd*) militia, which he whipped into shape and armed well with weapons taken from the retreating Czechoslovakian Legion. During Mamontov's breakthrough, Antonov and his men became partisans. After the Whites were driven off, he did not return to regular service but declared himself a defender of the peasants, whom he considered oppressed by the Bolsheviks. The provincial Cheka could do nothing about this new detachment. Men loyal to Antonov, who served in local government organs and in the Cheka itself, always warned him in time.

The uprising began on August 20, 1920, and soon spread throughout the province. The driving force behind it was the peasants' dissatisfaction with grain requisitioning. In January 1921 the rebels controlled



five counties: Tambov, Kirsanov, Borisoglebsk, Morshan, and Kozlov. They numbered 50,000 in two armies, which were organized in regiments, each attached to a particular territory. In many ways Antonov's armies copied the RKKa: they had commissars, political departments, and tribunals. An operational headquarters headed by Antonov directed all the rebel forces. The source of their fighting spirit was the consciousness of each soldier that he was defending his home and his land. Intelligence was well organized.

The rebels formed their own party, the Union of Working Peasants. A peasant from the village of Inokovok, Tokmakov, headed its Provincial Committee, which carried out agitation among Red Army men sent to subdue them. Often their propaganda was most amateurish. The following flyer, which we have reproduced with its original flavor serves as a good example:

Mobilized friends it is time to wake up long enough we have listened to the arrogant communists porosites of the Whole working people. Down with the porosites of the Whole working people, down with the fratricidal war, mobilized friends throw down your weapons go home to defend your bread, earned by the sweat and blood of your civil rights. Remember mobilized brother know what you are doing, why are you defending these arrogant communists terrorists of the Whole working People. Down with Lenin's Jewish decrees and the foul soviet. Long live the committee of the constituent assembly.

The SRS' hand is obvious in other appeals:

You will find your rights in struggle. Mobilized Red Army men. End your ignorance. Stop your ignoble acts against the peasants, especially against the rebels. It is time for you to come to yourself, to be aware of your worthless conduct. Fighting the peasant rebellions with the communists, you turn the people's anger against yourself. Aren't your fathers, brothers and families in the same circumstances as the rebellious peasants, squeezed on every side by the communists and soviets? Look around you: where are the freedoms of speech, press, unions, association, and faith, the inviolability of the individual. . . .

Soviet sources, especially those from the early twenties, acknowledged, had to acknowledge, the purely peasant, apolitical, and sponta-



neous nature of the uprising. Hot on the tracks of the events it is harder to distort the truth. One wrote:

We cannot doubt, however, that the Antonov uprising, in which the leading active roles were taken by kulaks, deserters, the criminal element, and in part the "village intelligentsia," also was supported by a spontaneous, usually passive, dissatisfaction of the greater peasant mass with the requisitioning policy of the Soviet authorities. The villages, if they did not actively support the movement, did not hinder it, and where it came to guerrilla fighting showed similar support.<sup>11</sup>

A significant admission! On the one hand there were only kulaks, deserters, criminals, and the village intelligentsia, whom comrade Litovsky, unable to hide his revulsion, places in quotations marks. But there was also a small problem of another sort—grain *requisitions*—to which the peasant masses could not reconcile themselves. It is not surprising that the muzhiks did not hinder the rebels who were defending them from the thieves, the requisitioning detachments. It was more than that, the local peasants were the manpower of the uprising.

The tone of another book published at the height of the *Antonovshchina* was more vicious and abusive. What can you do? That is freedom of the press! In it the rebels were "kulaks, vicious deserters from the Red Army, inveterate scoundrels and cutthroats—lovers of easy gain by theft and murder. They are old tsarist officers, intelligentsia, priests. The socialist-revolutionaries lead them. It was they who prepared the uprising and organized the bandit gangs."<sup>12</sup>

Things were bad, as we can see. What self-respecting peasant would want to wind up companion to the intelligentsia, officers, and scoundrels, especially under the leadership of socialist-revolutionaries? The same author, Vladimir Dokukin, offers an excerpt from a resolution passed at a conference of independent peasants of Tambov and Lebediansk counties, written, doubtless, by a Bolshevik: "Some of the Tambov peasants have surrendered to bourgeois deceit. . . . Soviet institutions are not working the way they should. They are filled with muddleheaded workers and criminal hangers-on."<sup>13</sup>

We might ask, why are the criminals on one side (with the muddle-headed workers) better than the scoundrels and cutthroats of the other? Our own always smells better.

There are more hints about the character of the Soviet authorities'

relations with the peasantry in the anthology *Antonovshchina*: "Those who suffered most were the peasants who were not associated with the SR bandits. They fell under the blows of *the Reds* and *the Whites*. Frequent incidents of extreme repression from both sides were absolutely unavoidable."<sup>14</sup>

What have we here? The Whites, or rather the *Antonovtsy*, we can understand. They had the nature of wolves, of SRs, of bandits. But what about the Reds? Why were acts of extreme repression against peaceful peasants who had no relations with anyone absolutely unavoidable? Why should we think of the Reds as superior in this ugly business?

In truth, words can lead us astray, and not just the words of poets. Hail, comrades Evgenov, Litovsky, and Dokukin, who past the blinders of the Party bias brought us these crumbs of truth. Future, more watchful editors from the new intelligentsia (without quotation marks) removed the last hints of authenticity from written history.

The Kremlin was seriously alarmed by the large uprising in the very heart of Russia. At first, in the autumn of 1920, they thought they could handle it with central directives and local forces. A Plenipotentiary Commission of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee headed by Antonov-Ovseenko came to Tambov. They decided to pit two of theirs against the rebellious Antonov: another Antonov was appointed chairman of the provincial Cheka. It did not help.

They had to take more serious measures. On February 10, 1921, a month before the Tenth Party Congress and the cancellation of grain requisitioning throughout the country, requisitioning was abolished in Tambov, and all of the requisitioning squads were removed. Lenin received a delegation of Tambov peasants on February 14 and personally confirmed that decision. Still the uprising continued.

Such callous ingratitude called for stronger measures. Special Tambov province units were created, subordinated directly to the commander-in-chief. At first they were commanded by P. A. Pavlov, then from May 1921 by Tukhachevsky with N. E. Kakurin as chief of staff. The Tambov peasants could not stand up to the relentless onslaught of regular troops.<sup>15</sup> There was nowhere they could get supplies, no one to support them. They were constantly called upon to surrender with the promise of complete amnesty. Unfortunately we do not have any information about how this promise was honored.

The death agony of the uprising began in 1921. Here are the official

statistics. From May 28 to July 26, 5,585 men turned themselves in voluntarily, 1,260 with weapons, 4,325 without; 5,285 were seized in roundups, 572 armed, and 4,713 unarmed; 985 others were captured; and 4,555 were killed in fighting. Altogether in these two months, the total was 16,370. Together with deserters (7,646) and those who had turned themselves in voluntarily before May 28 (12,903), the losses of the rebel forces numbered 36,919. The large number of rebels who were taken unarmed seems to suggest that as a group they were not heavily armed.

Remnants of the rebel bands resisted longer, until the end of 1922. On June 22, 1922, Aleksander Antonov and his brother Dmitri were surrounded in the remote village of Nizhny Shibriai in Borisoglebsk county by a detachment of two Chekists and six former rebels under M. Pokaliukhin. They were killed in an exchange of gunfire.

The Tambov uprising was not an isolated or exceptional episode. During 1921 and 1922 the Red Army was kept busy in the "little" Civil War against the muzhiks. Here is a list of the names of the sr-kulak (read peasant) uprisings for that period, which are given in official historiography:

Surgutsky	Oirotsky (Kaigorodovs' gang)
Zauralsky (Kurgan)	Ukrainsky (Makhno)
Irkutsky	Ekaterinburgsky
Ishimsko-Petropavlovsky	Severo-Kavkazsky
Vitebsky	Zavolzhsy (Sapozhkov)
Vernensky (Kazakhstan)	Karelsky
Iaroslavsky	Bashkirsky
Kostromskoi	

# II

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## Those Turbulent Twenties

So let us try. A huge  
And squeaky turn of rudder.  
—Osip Mandelshtam





All our political history, from the illness and death of Lenin to the expropriation of the peasantry, can be seen as a series of battles between Stalin and other leaders of the Russian Communist Party. Each brought Stalin closer to complete sovereignty in the Party.

In support of this point of view we can offer the following approximate periodization for the 1920s:

*1923–24.* Stalin in a bloc with Zinoviev and Kamenev against Trotsky. The secret deal with Bukharin and his group. Appointment of Rykov as Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and of Frunze as Assistant Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR.

*1925.* Replacement of Trotsky by Frunze. The defeat of Zinoviev and Kamenev. Liquidation of Frunze. Appointment of Voroshilov People's Commissar of the Navy and Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council.

*1926.* Struggle with the united Trotskyite-Zinovievite opposition. The death of Dzerzhinsky.

*1927.* The complete defeat of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Trotsky, and their supporters. Departure of Tukhachevsky from the Headquarters of the RKKA. Pogrom at Gosplan, the massive slaughter of engineers. Industrialization. Beginning of the campaign against the "Right."

*1929.* Political liquidation of Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsy. Collectivization. Voroshilov's article "Stalin and the Red Army."

Stalin showed himself to be an exceptional political strategist in those years. He employed his talent in behind-the-scenes machinations, intrigues, conspiracies, and provocations. Stalin preferred indirect action, at which he was an intuitive master. His favorite device was to demoralize his enemies so that when he actually struck, they were already significantly weakened. Stalin's rivals almost always disagreed with one another and were unable to act decisively. He artfully manipulated their discord to set them against one another. At the right moment he isolated the most dangerous, allied himself with the others, and removed the one.

In 1923 and 1924 Stalin was able to use Zinoviev and Kamenev to deliver several crushing blows to Trotsky, from which Trotsky never recovered. Remaining in the shadows, Stalin removed from his path to power a politician whose name from the moment of the October Revolution was invariably associated with Lenin's and who seemed to the majority of the population Lenin's rightful successor. Trotsky and other prominent men, who were independent in their views but were branded with the convenient common epithet Trotskyite, did not strive primarily to gain personal power, but rather to overcome a tendency they feared might destroy the Revolution: domination by the Party apparatus and a rebirth of bureaucratism. Zinoviev and Kamenev were so frightened of Trotsky's apparent Napoleonic pretensions, of which Stalin had warned them, that in the heat of battle they did not notice the weakening of their own positions. Kamenev, Stalin's friend and his recent protector, did not become head of the government in January 1924. He had performed that function for more than a year during Lenin's illness and was the primary candidate for the position. The ostensible reason was that because of the prejudice of the peasant masses, it would be politically harmful to have a Jew at the head of the government. The question of whether it would be useful to have a Georgian as the general secretary of the Party seems not to have been raised. A. I. Rykov became the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars. Kamenev had to be satisfied with the portfolio of chairman of the Council of Labor and Defense. Lenin had filled that post, too. Now the two posts were separated to give Kamenev a little something to sweeten the pill.

Rykov was part of a new, and for the time being secret, group of allies of Stalin, as were Bukharin and Tomsy. It is likely that the chief attraction of these new friends for Stalin was their purely Russian heritage, which contrasted very usefully with the Jewish domination of the Party's hierarchy, especially in the circles of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Trotsky. Bukharin got to work zealously and attacked Trotsky with praiseworthy diligence. Not long before, at the Tenth Congress, he had aligned himself with Trotsky on the question of trade unions.

In 1925 Zinoviev and Kamenev felt Stalin's hand and hurried to put together their own faction based in Leningrad. But they were too late. At the Fourteenth Congress Stalin dealt them a severe blow. Bukharin's group and Stalin's faceless protégés, who now made up a majority of the party, attacked them savagely. Trotsky, already beaten and humiliated, chose not to interfere.

It would be a mistake to see Stalin's victory at the Congress as a result of behind-the-scenes maneuvering only. It was not that simple. The very openness of the struggle was its hallmark. The personal quarrels of the leaders surfaced publicly for the first time at the Fourteenth Congress. Previously there had occurred bitter conflicts of opinions, platforms, and positions, but never before had there been talk about organized repression of individuals—especially of the top leaders. In the first years of the Revolution Kamenev, Zinoviev, Bukharin, Nogin, and many others had broken with Lenin over basic questions of policy, had resigned from their posts, and had announced their departure from the Central Committee. But each time the problems had been worked out bloodlessly.

This was how Lenin conceived Party structure. Already at the turn of the century he saw the Party as a centralized organization welded together by iron discipline and headed by a stable, that is irremovable, collective leadership. In this way he hoped to secure the continuity of policy and inviolability of basic ideology.

Lenin's collective included Sverdlov (who died in 1919), Kamenev, Zinoviev, Stalin, Trotsky, Bukharin, Dzerzhinsky, Kalinin, and a number of others. It was assumed that these comrades would run the Party and the state. Disagreements on individual questions became public only with the permission of the Central Committee; and after a decision was reached, all would submit to it.<sup>1</sup> However bitter the verbal battles became, the blood of the minority was never demanded.

That is the way things went until Lenin's illness knocked him from the saddle. Enmity immediately flared up among his colleagues. We can say it another way: they discovered they could not work together collectively. It all began with the conspiracy against Trotsky. Zinoviev advanced the cunning plan, which was discussed by a narrow circle of conspirators in a grotto near Kislovodsk ("the cave meetings"). To strengthen the leadership during Lenin's illness, he proposed to replace the Politburo with a "politicized" Secretariat composed of Zinoviev, Stalin, and Trotsky. Kamenev would remain head of the Council of People's Commissars and the Council of Trade and Defense. That combination would make Trotsky a permanent minority; he would not be able to form blocs on various issues as he had done in the Politburo. But the plan was shelved by Stalin, who had extremely unfriendly relations with Trotsky, but who up to this time took care to clothe his animosity in official resolutions. He spoke about this in 1925:



In 1923 after the Twelfth Congress the men who gathered in the "Cave" [laughter] worked out the platform about the destruction of the Politburo and the politicization of the Secretariat, that is about turning the Secretariat into the leading political-organizational organ run by Zinoviev, Trotsky, and Stalin. What was the idea of that platform? What did it mean? It meant running the Party without Rykov, Kalinin, Tomsy, Molotov, and Bukharin. Nothing came of the platform and not only because it was unprincipled, but because without those comrades I have mentioned it was not possible to run the Party. To the question posed me in writing from the bowels of Kislovodsk, I answered in the negative, announcing that if the comrades insisted, I was ready to leave the place quietly, without discussions, open or secret, and without demanding guarantees of the rights of the minority [laughter].

Stalin for understandable reasons did not want to make public all the inner secrets of the Central Committee. He did not expose his personal motives in that affair. He evidently sensed immediately that he himself might turn out to be in the minority if the wind shifted. In any case, Stalin appeared to outsiders to be the preserver of Party solidarity and the enemy of intrigue.

After Lenin's death late in 1924 Zinoviev and Kamenev thought of an easier way to get rid of Trotsky. Again Stalin's words:

The Leningrad provincial committee passed a resolution to expel comrade Trotsky from the Party. We, that is the majority of the Central Committee, did not agree with that [Voices: "Right!"]. We had something of a fight with the Leningraders and convinced them to eliminate the point about exclusion from their resolution. A little while later when we had a meeting of the Plenum of the Central Committee, the Leningraders and comrade Kamenev demanded the immediate exclusion of comrade Trotsky from the Politburo. We disagreed with that proposal, won a majority in the Central Committee, and limited ourselves to removing comrade Trotsky from his post as People's Commissar of War.<sup>2</sup>

Immediately Stalin made a statement staggering for its candor and sagacity:

We did not agree with comrades Zinoviev and Kamenev because we knew that the policy of expulsion was fraught with serious

dangers for the Party, that the method of expulsion, the method of letting blood—and they were demanding blood—was dangerous, infectious: today we cut one off, tomorrow another, the day after that a third. What would be left of the Party? [Applause.]<sup>3</sup>

It hardly matters what Stalin thought when he objected to expulsion. What is more important is that he claimed to stand for unity and for the inviolability of the Leninist leadership, while his opponents preached a pogrom. This position made him more popular with the leadership and the rank and file of the Party; his authority grew enormously.

In the second half of 1925 Zinoviev and Kamenev split with the majority of the Central Committee, which was headed by Stalin, over the formulation of the general political line. Zinoviev and Kamenev suggested a contradictory and psychologically unacceptable course: on the one hand they wanted to put the squeeze on capitalistic elements, that is to continue the Civil War in peacetime; and on the other hand they would admit that socialism could not be built in Russia until the world revolution had come. Bukharin protested that there was no reason to start a war, that it would do them no good now they were in power. He insisted also that it would be foolish to touch the peasants, because they were supplying grain for now, and they would grow into socialism later. Stalin said, “We have had our socialist revolution, now let’s build socialism. If there should be a world revolution, wonderful; if not, we will get along without it. We can’t just mark time waiting for it; no one knows when it might come.” Without going into the essence of the argument, it is enough to note that Stalin’s position looked more logical and attractive.

On the eve of the Congress Zinoviev decided to strike through his Leningrad *oprichnina*<sup>4</sup> at Bukharin and took aim at his slogan “Get rich.” (Stalin at that time apparently accepted the idea if not the formulation of it.) At the Congress, where they were in a clear minority (only the Leningrad delegation), the inseparable pair put on a noisy demonstration. Zinoviev delivered an extremely long supplementary report in which he said nothing except that socialism in one country was impossible. Kamenev, supported by Sokolnikov, openly demanded a shake-up of the organs of the Central Committee and the removal of Stalin from his post as general secretary.

Stalin, having made himself part of the overwhelming majority, limited himself to discrediting his opponents as unprincipled intriguers

and bad Leninists; but he did not demand their blood. Both of them remained on the Politburo.

Zinoviev and Kamenev miscalculated badly. Striving for absolute power, they planned to use Stalin, the hard-working but rather dull organizer, to push Trotsky aside and trample the rest. On the way to this goal they encroached upon the organizational bases of the Party. They did not achieve what they were after, but they did clear Stalin's path to personal supremacy.

It is very likely that Stalin had dreamed of personal dictatorship before this but did not know how to go about getting it. Not having a glorious past of indisputable authority, the cautious mountain man did not want to take a premature risk. If he had grabbed for power and failed soon after Lenin's death, his removal would have caused little stir. Most people thought of him then only as a minor figure in the Central Committee, like Krestinsky or Molotov. (In January 1925 he put his enemies to a test. He offered his resignation, which they refused.) At the Fourteenth Congress he gained enormous political capital at one stroke. Besides that, the means by which he would reach power—the method of removal—was put on the agenda. The taboo against consuming the flesh of the leaders had not been lifted, but their halos had been tarnished. The careless acts of the next opposition strengthened Stalin even more.

By 1926 Zinoviev and his group realized their position was shaky and hurried to ally with their recent victims, first of all with Trotsky. But the leaders of this new bloc had already lost their key positions. In the eyes of the rank-and-file Party members, whose numbers had sharply increased after Lenin's draft of 1924, they appeared to be schismatics who had set themselves against the Party line and were now trying to regain their lost influence. Only the older Party intellectuals from before the Revolution were able to differentiate shades of opinion and regularly allowed themselves to make their own judgments. The dispute had made no sense to most people; they commonly explained it as a "fight for portfolios." In these circumstances the new Party members preferred to vote the way the local apparatchiks told them to. For them the Central Committee Secretariat, which was firmly controlled by Stalin, was as holy and sinless as the Pope in Rome. The Secretariat issued directives and orders, usually verbally and always secretly, which arbitrarily interrupted decisions of congresses and plenums to the advantage of Stalin's group. The opposition had no way to



get their point of view to the local Party organizations. Their difficulties were greatest just before a congress or conference. Any attempt to address the Party directly qualified as an illegal act, a violation of the rules. To give the opposition the rostrum at a congress did not have much meaning. They had to address a select and hostile audience. By the time of the next congress the form of disagreement had changed, and all had to begin again.

The new "united" opposition was unable to present a coherent program. In the past Trotsky and Zinoviev had rarely held the same opinion. By character and by conviction they were exact opposites. Trotsky was by temperament revolutionary; he was decisive and adventuresome. Zinoviev, having spent many years as Lenin's literary secretary, was a tedious theoretician, an intriguer, and a coward. In October Trotsky had been the soul of the uprising (Lenin was its head); fearing historical responsibility, Zinoviev and Kamenev had deserted.

For the sake of unity the faction had to pile rather contradictory views into one eclectic heap. From the Trotskyites came the slogan about the struggle with bureaucratization and a Thermidorean reaction in the Party, and also superindustrialization at the expense of the peasants. From the Zinovites came the thesis about the impossibility of building socialism without help in the form of a world revolution. (The question arises, why hurry with the development of industry if we will nonetheless not be able to attain socialism on our own?) The opposition's hastily rigged program, together with their tactical impotence and organizational weakness, foreordained their defeat.

In 1926 Stalinists and other officials hostile in one way or another to the opposition held all the most important posts. The General Secretary of the Party was Stalin himself; Ordzhonikidze was chairman of the Central Control Commission; Rykov was chairman of the Council of People's Commissars; Bukharin was editor of *Pravda*; Tomsky was head of the Unions; Dzerzhinsky was head of OGPU, NKVD, and the VSNKh. While not a strong supporter of Stalin, Dzerzhinsky was an irreconcilable enemy of Zinoviev and Kamenev. In July 1926 he dropped dead at a meeting of the Central Committee, where he had spoken twice on secondary issues, polemicizing violently with Zinoviev and Piatakov, his assistant at VSNKh. His death greatly benefited Stalin. "Iron Feliks" had the reputation of a fervent and incorruptable fanatic, merciless to any enemy of the Party and socialism. Whether he actually was or was not is hard to say, but he had the reputation. However that



may be, Stalin could consider himself lost if Dzerzhinsky had suspected him of improper activities or intentions. And there was something to fear. Only very recently Frunze had died a very messy death. The head of the punitive organs left the scene at a very opportune time. We will have another occasion to speak of this affair.

The opposition appeared at that time to be in a much less imposing position. Trotsky was chairman of the Concessions Committee;<sup>5</sup> Kamenev was People's Commissar of Trade. Zinoviev after his removal from the Executive Committee of the Comintern was apparently nothing at all. The fact that they remained members of the Central Committee and the Politburo only weakened them further. According to Party rules, members of the Politburo did not have the right to speak publicly without the agreement of that body, and Stalin had power over the majority. Besides, Bukharin blocked their access to the Party press. The game was played mostly at one end of the field.

When the opposition lost patience and decided to ignore the rules, they publicized their platform and even risked forming their own procession at the tenth anniversary celebration of the October Revolution. But these were more than gestures done for effect. It was as if Stalin had been waiting for something like that. An organized purge began even before the Congress. On November 14, 1927, a joint plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission resolved to expel Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Party. Kamenev remained for the time being. It was all done by Party rules. This was the first application of the seventh point of the resolution "On Party Unity," which had provoked such argument and doubts at the Tenth Congress.<sup>6</sup>

A little more than a month later, at the Fifteenth Congress, the Stalin-Bukharin coalition achieved the destruction of their enemy. Trotsky's and Zinoviev's appeal to this lofty gathering availed them nothing. They were trying to close the barn door after the horse had escaped. The delegates had been carefully selected and thoroughly instructed. This was the last Congress at which the opposition was permitted to express their views. It was a sad spectacle: one after another the few opposition speakers were driven from the rostrum by the hoots of a well-rehearsed clique. Only Kamenev persevered to complete his speech despite the diabolic noise.

The game of inner-Party democracy came to an end. A decision was made to drive all opposition from the Party en masse and to permit

applications for readmission to be heard on an individual basis by the Central Committee, not the Congress. Part of the opposition, including its leaders, immediately surrendered and submitted a penitent statement to the Congress, but a fresh indignity awaited them. Their capitulation was refused, and the whole question was turned over to the Central Committee.<sup>7</sup> Trotsky was exiled to Verny (now Alma-Ata) and in 1929 was thrown out of the country. Hundreds of lesser Trotskyites went into Siberian exile. These were the first repressions by the Bolsheviks against members of their own Party.

Stalin was far from drunk with success. The victory was total but not final. There were groups left in the Party who recognized him as their leader and the instrument of the will of the majority, but not the God-given Great Leader. There were many such comrades, but with each passing month they were spread more thinly among the faceless mass of new recruits, the time-serving and self-serving people who flooded into the ruling Party. Yet these seemingly independent older members enjoyed popularity and influence among the masses because of their earlier activities, the years in the underground, the Revolution, the Civil War, and their literary fame. The time had not come to muzzle them all, so Stalin decided to strike at the more notable of them near the center of power. Politburo members Bukharin, Rykov, Tomsky, the leader of the Moscow Party organization Uglanov, and others associated with them were worthy objects of attack. They continued to believe in their own importance and to attempt to guide theory and practical affairs in their own way. Stalin had long perceived their defenselessness; moreover, he was indebted to many of them for their services in the battle with Trotsky and Zinoviev. The General Secretary did not like to feel obligated; he much preferred to pick the moment to repay his creditors. Finally, they were widely popular and deflected to themselves part of the people's attention and love, which by rights belonged to Stalin alone.

In 1928 and 1929 Stalin suddenly redirected his fire. While he was attempting to rid himself of the opposition, he had followed Bukharin's ideological lead, advocating civil peace and the opening of social and economic opportunities for the rural producers, that is, for the kulaks. But once the Zinovievites had been kicked out of the vanguard along with Trotsky, Stalin made a sharp turn to the left, much sharper than Zinoviev and Kamenev had wanted, and more decisively than Lev Davidovich himself would have done. At this sharp turn the Bukharinites

skidded into the ditch; they were now called the Right. This was an even more impressive victory for Stalin, even though it was not so sensational. Bukharin, who stood for the peaceful development of socialism for all the peasantry, had a very wide following.

It could not have been otherwise in the land of the muzhik. The rural people craved a life of peace and plenty, whatever scholarly theoreticians might call it. Bukharin, however, disappointed the hopes and expectations of his simple supporters. When under the guise of collectivization Stalin declared the crusade against the muzhik, they put up an abstract, theoretical opposition; but they did not engage him openly. At the Sixteenth Congress in 1930 they offered a white flag: Rykov, Tomsky, and Uglanov confessed to errors they had not committed; Bukharin, pleading illness, did not appear at all. The Bukharinites' betrayal of other Party leaders came back to haunt them; they did not keep their hold on power.

It did not matter that Bukharin and Stalin were personal friends, that they visited each other at home and shared a dacha. In Party matters Josef Vissarionovich was able to put sentiment behind him. True, in destroying the Right, he long refrained from extreme measures. They (the Rightists) were only expelled from the Politburo and driven from the commanding heights. They remained members of the Central Committee and received lesser posts. It is possible that personal feelings played a certain role in this. When he battered his friends, Stalin did not work to the limit of his strength, although in his own way he kept his purposes in mind. He had to remember that Bukharchik was the darling of the Party.

Stalin would not have been Stalin had he given himself entirely to the fight with these pitiful opponents, either real or fancied. Comrade Stalin had studied Lenin well, he had certainly read Engels, and he knew something of Marx. He had assimilated what was most important, and that was that at the base of political power lay the mastery of the economy and of productive relations. And it was precisely in the economic area that things were not going well. The nationalized industry was barely functioning; the country was experiencing a shortage of consumer goods. The peasants carried on with their backward small-scale agriculture. They might at any time decide to withhold grain, and then the country would experience a real famine. True, the muzhiks were for the time being turning over their produce, but they were grumbling that there was nothing for them in the stores. Stalin, who



had just yesterday declared the building of socialism in one country, in bast-sandal Russia, preferred satisfaction and universal gratitude to grumbling. He looked about for the means to his ends, and they immediately turned up.

This breadth of views was characteristic of Stalin. He did not hesitate to adopt a useful idea or a slogan that had originated with others. He selected what he could use, and when the time was right, he put it into action.

When the Trotskyites, fervid revolutionaries and impatient visionaries that they were, called for the accelerated development of industry (superindustrialization) and for harnessing the peasantry to achieve it (it looked a lot like robbery), Stalin, it would seem, opposed them. He unleashed upon them a pack of circumspect theoreticians headed by Bukharin, who were protective and indulgent of the muzhik. Bukharin was considered an economist in the Party—not the sort, God forbid, who busied himself with the vulgar economy, but who knew all about surplus value and the inescapable failure of world capitalism. In his leisure hours he liked to think about the village and dreamed up the slogan “Get rich!” to advocate the peaceful integration of the kulak into socialism. The peasants found this a satisfying contrast to the demands of the Trotskyites, those kikes and muzhik eaters. (Stalin never supported the slogan in public, and when the tactical necessity for it faded, he required Bukharin to renounce it. That was in 1925–26.) Stalin fought against the Trotskyites’ ideas; but being a thrifty person, he filed them in his memory in case they should later prove useful. Although he could not accept these ideas directly from the hands of sworn enemies, he recognized the advantages of a cavalry approach to the economy, which paved the way for brutal centralization and the complete destruction of independent economic units.

Trotskyism had hardly ceased to be a real force when Stalin began to use its slogans. He only slightly altered the phraseology (the Five-Year Plan, collectivization) and neglected to cite his sources. Instantly the good-humored Bukharin and his comrades became Right deviationists and supporters of the kulaks.

From a safe distance, in exile abroad, Trotsky tried to defend his priority. He asserted that the idea to force all the peasants into collective farms belonged to him and his supporters. Stalin laughed. In the first place, for Marxists it is axiomatic that the role of the individual in history must not be exaggerated, especially of such individuals as



Trotsky. Second, what was important was the building of socialism. Quarrels about who said what first and who did not were minor. In the third place, all the circumstances of the moment must be taken into consideration. To propose a slogan prematurely was to run ahead of the masses, to alienate oneself from the masses as an ultraleftist. Fourth, and finally, if one were to ask those same masses, the workers, the collective farmers, they would tell it straight: it was Stalin's plan for collectivization, Stalin's Five-Year Plan. That's how it was with industrialization, the collectivization of agriculture, and the pretenses of Mr. Trotsky.

Stalin did not only borrow. His creative faculties were also wide awake. In 1928 he apparently devised the thesis "the cadres decide all"; and, keeping it to himself, decided to start by destroying the old engineer cadres. That year a zealous investigator from the town of Shakhty in Rostov province concocted a charge of sabotage against a group of mining specialists. R. Menzhinsky, the chairman of OGPU, saw the charges as provocation and threatened the investigator with a tribunal if he did not present real evidence of guilt. Stalin, on the other hand, saw the possibilities of the case, latched onto it, and gave it national importance. Such trials, trumped up for show, enabled him to create and sustain an atmosphere of uncertainty, suspicion, and fear in the country and greatly facilitated his rule. With the Russian aptitude for muddling and bungling, it was easy to pin charges of sabotage or wrecking on any worker or group. Victims for repression could be found at will. The Shakhty case helped develop the methods, the technology of the sort of trial that was to prove so useful in the future.

The trial was successful. True, at first Menzhinsky opposed him; but Stalin defeated him in the Politburo<sup>8</sup> and made him toe the line. Later on, the punitive organs did what they were told and even displayed some initiative.

The nascent personal dictatorship had found a suitable weapon. Stalin hurried to try out the relatively untested method on a larger scale. He struck at the technological intelligentsia.

It is worth pausing a moment at this point. In essence, Stalin's dictatorship was more than personal, for he already had behind him the Party bureaucracy, which was composed of old Bolshevik backbenchers and newcomer Party careerists. The dilution of the revolutionary party began immediately after the October Revolution. In the early 1920s it assumed threatening proportions. Merciless purges did not solve the

problem. It was a labor of Sisyphus: the careerists and thieves were replaced by others, more numerous and more insistent. The monopoly on political power had an ugly reverse side. All the unscrupulous people, who in different circumstances would have been spread among many parties, flocked to the Bolsheviks.<sup>9</sup>

The new people, like all *nouveaux riches* and *parvenus* in history, were insolent, impatient, and unscrupulous. They joined the ruling party to rule and to get their hunk of the state pie: they did not care about implementing Marx's outline from "Critique of the Gotha Program," nor were they in accordance with "Anti-Dühring" to make the leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom; certainly they did not join to enjoy philosophical and political-economic discussions. It must be acknowledged that they did have to learn a certain amount of the dogma from the Party catechism, but they viewed that as an "entry fee," an unavoidable evil. In the mid-1920s two groups blocked their way to power: the Party intelligentsia with their laurels of service to the Revolution, Marxist erudition, powerful pens, and ability to speak to the masses; and the technological intelligentsia, without whom, or so thought the first Soviet leaders, it would be impossible to advance economically and culturally. The newly converted Communists looked upon the intellectuals with hostility: organic, since they mostly came from the same middle class; and social, since they were privileged competitors.

Stalin had long ago perceived that force, and he understood that the future belonged to it. It was to this new Communist force that he addressed his sermons, in which the most complex problems were reduced to absurdity and, in his seminarian's way, were summed up in questions and answers. The bureaucratic mass quickly came to value Stalin. They were attracted by the clarity (which was more truly primitiveness) of his speeches, which contained no scholarly flourishes or painful contradictions. Most important, he always set them against the very things and people they themselves despised. First the oppositionists, who spoke with unintelligible cleverness, who kept the simple people from making their way, and who were practically all Jews anyway. (About that, it is true, no one spoke openly, but like it or not, the thought came to mind as one looked at those noses, those bulging eyes, that curly hair.) Then the specialists, who treated the newcomers so condescendingly, who strutted their knowledge and culture, and who in any case came from the class of former exploiters. (Questions like

that it was all right to discuss.) By his intellectual development and his education Stalin was the same sort of superficial, half-educated person as this new generation of timeservers. He spouted the same prejudices.

When Stalin invented wrecking and generously shared his discovery with the rank and file of the Party, they were more than grateful. They understood: Stalin was the messiah of the new religion, the new living god and commander they had wanted since Lenin had died. The process by which Stalin and the Party bureaucrats found one another is fascinating, and it still awaits its researchers.

Hesitation, confusion, and disorientation were all unavoidable in the struggle with the oppositionists. Many of the young members of the Party were awed by their names and reputations: Trotsky, the great leader of the Red Army; Zinoviev, head of Comintern; and others. On the other hand, with the specialists everything was clear and easy. As A. Belinkov has correctly noted, the relations between the intelligentsia and the Revolution, that is Soviet authority, were no longer open to question.<sup>10</sup>

The destruction of the old engineering cadres was carried out quickly and without loss by the attackers. Some of the specialists were executed; others were imprisoned for obstinacy, to be used later in the projects of the Five-Year Plan and to meet quotas. The rest went into hiding and no longer dared to contradict any of the plans of the leadership. In 1937 they would be forced to publicly lick the boots of the NKVD, but that is another story, which will be told in its own place.

One of the most glaring examples was the pogrom of the experts—the Menshevik economists and the banking and industrial bigwigs at Gosplan and VSNKh. Now all of the conditions were in place for the first Stalinist Five-Year Plan, for truly Stalinist—that is purely paper—planning. Entirely unreachable goals were written into the plans, but nonetheless the Five-Year Plan was fulfilled in four years. Now Kuibyshev and Ordzhonikidze could furrow their brows and toss about billions of rubles and millions of tons of steel, and there was no one to think to refer them to Malinin and Burinin's *Arithmetic*.<sup>11</sup>

These were the circumstances in which Voroshilov's article "Stalin and the Red Army" appeared.<sup>12</sup>



From the beginning of the 1920s serious changes occurred in the status of the Red Army. Maintaining a force of five million men became more of a burden than the Republic could bear. But demobilization was complicated by two factors: fear of disarming too soon, and the effort of the government to follow the letter of Party ideology. Red Armymen released from service were not permitted to go straight home: they were formed into labor armies, according to Marx's recipe, to resuscitate the economy. In fact, they became forced laborers. This undertaking proved fruitless, and after only a few months it was abandoned. In 1922 and 1923 the Army shrank precipitously, to 500,000 men.

Even after that, however, the character of the Army contradicted Marxist doctrine. The founders, and Lenin after them, considered a regular army an instrument of oppression and a major element in the plundering of a nation's wealth. A militia, the people armed on the example of Switzerland, was considered ideal. The workers could be given military training without being taken from productive work; in a time of danger they would rise to defend the homeland. Real service in peacetime was excluded or permitted only for short periods of training.

It is interesting to note Lenin's views on the Army. In 1903 in "On Village Poverty" he wrote:

A standing army is not needed to defend the state from attack; a people's militia is sufficient for that. If every citizen of the state is armed, no enemy can frighten Russia. And the people would be free of the burden of militarism: *hundreds of millions of rubles a year* are spent on militarism. Taxes are raised so high to support it that it becomes harder and harder to live. Militarism strengthens the power of the police and bureaucrats over the people.<sup>1</sup>

In 1905 in "The Army and Revolution" Lenin wrote that it was necessary to destroy the standing army and replace it by arming all the people. "A standing army, everywhere, in all countries, serves not so much against external as against internal enemies," he stated. "Standing



armies have everywhere become weapons of reaction . . . the executioner of people's freedom. . . . We will utterly destroy the standing army. . . . No force on earth will dare invade free Russia if the armed people, having destroyed the military caste, are the bulwark of freedom."<sup>2</sup> At the height of the imperialist war he maintained this position. "The contemporary national army remains a weapon in the hands of certain individuals, families, classes. . . . The army of the democratic collective of socialist society is nothing more than the armed people, since it consists of highly cultured people, freely working in collective shops and participating fully in all areas of the life of the state."<sup>3</sup>

On the eve of the February Revolution he wrote, "The Social Democrats want to destroy all armies . . . after the victorious socialist revolution."<sup>4</sup> After the fall of the autocracy he recalled, "The first decree of the Commune was the abolition of the standing army."<sup>5</sup>

If you were to show these quotations to a Soviet general today without naming the author, at best he would laugh. But even at the dawn of Soviet power this noble scheme could not have been realized. The Red Army was formed at first as a voluntary force, but very soon regular military units were being organized by compulsory conscription. After the Civil War, one more attempt was made to operate according to the Party program. That was the famous military reform of 1923–25. Its authors, particularly Frunze, worked out a compromise. The Red Army was given a dual structure in which regular units coexisted with territorial units that were more like a militia. However, this was only a formal concession to ideology. They took as their model the scheme employed by Field Marshal D. Milyutin in 1864–74.<sup>6</sup> They also borrowed Arakcheev's idea for military settlements in the border armies.<sup>7</sup> (The settlements in the Ukraine were liquidated quickly because of the Chuguevsk uprising of 1922, but they existed in the Far East until the end of the 1930s.)

We will describe Frunze's reforms only very briefly. We refer readers interested in greater detail to I. Berkhin's very thorough study.<sup>8</sup> From 1921 to 1925 the Army was reduced from 5,300,000 to 562,000 men. Military service became compulsory. Of the seventy-seven infantry divisions existing in 1925, only thirty-one, fewer than half, were regular Army. Militia units were assigned the task of giving the population a general military education in peacetime. They were also required to supply thirty divisions for the first weeks of war, while mobilization was being carried out. From the very beginning the Bolsheviks were

apprehensive about giving weapons to the people. Berkhin complains that the territorial units were infected with "peasant" attitudes: demands were heard for the creation of a "farmer's union," which would defend the peasants' interests. Therefore the authorities bent their efforts in the 1920s and 1930s to increasing the strength and size of the regular Army. The significance of the militias continuously waned; they were assigned auxiliary functions (military education of the population, guarding military and industrial objects, etc.).

In the period we are describing the Army, or more precisely its top leadership, was drawn into a maelstrom of political passions. The struggle centered on one of the most colorful and most controversial figures of the Revolution, the head of the RKKA, Lev Trotsky. During the Civil War the epithet "great leader and founder of the Red Army" affixed itself to Trotsky. Ironically, it may have been Stalin who devised the formula; in any case it appears in one of his articles from 1919.

Trotsky can be characterized in a single word: he was a revolutionary. Revolution was the governing passion of his life. He quickly came to the fore during the Revolution of 1905 when he became the real leader of the Petersburg Soviet. In the period between the revolutions, when the movement flagged, he tried to reconcile the feuding factions; he wrote on questions of literature and art; but he remained in surprising isolation, still not having found an outlet for his turbulent energy. Trotsky was an internationalist and a foe of the imperialist war, but he did not become, as Lenin did, a defeatist. The revolutionary upheaval in February 1917 brought him back to Russia. In the period immediately after February he did not join with the Bolshevik organization, but he did agree with them on the largest question of the Revolution, the necessity of seizing power.

In the July days of 1917 Trotsky was exceptionally brave. At the entrance to the Tauride Palace he literally snatched Minister of Agriculture Chernov from the hands of sailors who were about to kill him. When the Provisional Government began its campaign against the Bolsheviks, Lenin and Zinoviev on the orders of the Central Committee went into hiding. Trotsky, on the contrary, turned himself in voluntarily and demanded a public trial. "I do not belong to the Bolshevik organization formally," he announced, "but I share their views, and I am prepared to share responsibility." Kerensky's government held him for two months in Kresty Prison but was then forced to release him. By that time he was extraordinarily popular, especially among the soldiers,

who were drawn by his enormous energy and exceptional oratorical talent. When the Bolsheviks gained a majority in the Petrograd Soviet, Trotsky became its chairman. This gave Lenin and the Bolsheviks the ideal platform from which to launch the Revolution. Units of the Petrograd garrison would listen to no other organization. From then on Trotsky advanced hand in hand with Lenin in the debates about the immediate seizure of power. In these historic hours they did not have time to remember their earlier literary polemics in which Lenin had called Trotsky a "little Judas" and Trotsky had labeled Lenin the "exploiter of everything backward in the Russian workers' movement." As long as Lenin had to remain in hiding, Trotsky was without doubt the central figure in preparations for the October uprising. Even the moment of the convocation of the Second Congress of Soviets, which was timed to coincide with the Revolution, was not arbitrarily set: October 25 was Trotsky's birthday.

In Lenin's first cabinet Trotsky received the portfolio of People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs. His activities in the diplomatic sphere were, however, brief and highly unsuccessful. Trotsky was not suited for machinations and intrigue. His position in the negotiations with the Germans—"neither peace, nor war," combined with an appeal to the world proletariat—received Lenin's support, but led to disaster. The Germans attacked, and the Soviets did not have the strength to oppose them. They were forced to submit to the "obscene" Brest peace.

Trotsky was transferred to the post of People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs, where he was truly in his element. His frenzied energy and exceptional organizational abilities enabled him in a very short time to create the armed forces of the Soviet Republic, which saved the country in the Civil War. This was Trotsky's finest hour, when his personality unexpectedly blossomed. He saw himself as a doctrinaire Marxist, perhaps more orthodox than his spiritual fathers. But he had both a powerful mind and the ability—although not always, it is true—to put common sense ahead of ideological prejudices.

Party catechism required the establishment of a militia—army composed of the proletariat and the poorest peasantry, who would produce their own commander—revolutionaries on the field of battle. At first Lenin thought exactly along those lines. On November 24, 1918, he said, "Now, in building the new Army, we must take our commanders *only* from the people. Only Red officers will have authority among our soldiers and will be able to establish socialism in our Army."<sup>9</sup>



Trotsky understood that this could lead only to guerrilla bands and defeat. They could be saved only by a regular Army led by professionals. He boldly recruited unemployed officers of the tsarist army, who came to be called "military specialists." Half of the 300,000-man officer corps fought for the Reds. This solved another problem at the same time: if these officers had not been given the chance to serve the central authority in Moscow, most of them would have wound up fighting for the Whites.

The use of military specialists caused serious dissatisfaction in the Party. The doctrinaire theoreticians grumbled. The Army's Communists wailed heartrendingly; they did not want to carry out the orders of class enemies. But Trotsky, supported fully by the realist Lenin, stood firm and won.<sup>10</sup> The highest positions of command in the Red Army, not to mention headquarters posts, were given to former imperial officers: both commanders-in-chief, Vatsetis and S. Kamenev; all front commanders with the exception of Frunze; all Army commanders except Voroshilov, Sokolnikov, and Budenny. It was even truer of headquarters: former general P. Lebedev headed the Field Headquarters of the Revolutionary Military Council of Republic (RVSR). Even the staff of the First Horse Army, which was led by the specialist-baiters Voroshilov and Budenny, was manned by former officers.

Throughout the war Trotsky rushed about the fronts on his train inspiring enthusiasm and maintaining order with an iron hand. Everyone unreservedly recognized his decisive contribution to the victory of the Red Army—Lenin, Stalin, and many others. When the war ended, however, there was no suitable task for a man of his talents. A revolutionary has nothing to do in peacetime. For a time his acute mind found an outlet in devising bold schemes—he had proposed the idea of NEP a year before Lenin—but these were only episodes. Once again Party discipline began to stifle him. In 1922 from boredom he began to write a series of articles of literary criticism in which he first expressed the tenets of socialist realism.

Lenin's illness emphasized Trotsky's isolation. Hostilities found expression in office politics, intrigues, and alliances in which he did not wish, indeed was not able, to participate. In 1923 he spoke out against the Thermidorean reaction and the domination of the Party by apparatchiks. This was not a struggle for personal power as official historians try to present it. Quite the opposite, it was a protest against the real agony of the revolutionary spirit, against those who did seek a



personal dictatorship—Zinoviev, Stalin, Kamenev. Trotsky's denunciatory pathos evokes the style of the Jewish prophets. The incorrigible revolutionary damned his former comrades-in-arms as soft, gentrified, and wrapped in red tape. But Trotsky cried in the wilderness. Only half a hundred well-known Party activists spoke out with him (the platform of the forty-six); only a few thousand shared his fears. The Party did not understand him. Trotsky could ignite a crowd for immediate revolutionary action; but he could not conspire, bend with the fashionable breezes, or win supporters with bribes, promises, or deceit. At the Thirteenth Party conference he suffered total defeat.

It is not our purpose to compare the characters of Stalin and Trotsky, and certainly not to idealize the latter. We mean only to describe Trotsky's role in founding the Red Army and the consequences of his removal from military leadership. In that context it is enough to note that both of these famous Bolshevik revolutionaries were proponents of extreme measures, but with an important difference. Trotsky represented a European radicalism that did not go beyond the bounds of civilization. Stalin was a concentrated expression of Asiatic brutality, which was crueler in him as it was mixed with limitless perfidy. Only contemporary Stalinists, deprived of the chance to deify their idol, are able to say that Trotsky, had he come to power, would have been as ruthless as the Great Leader of the People. It cannot be denied that Stalin consulted time and again the cookbook of Trotskyism; but as Lenin said, his cuisine turned out unbearably spicy—and indigestible.

We have already said that the inviolability of Lenin's staff was breached first not by Stalin but by the black-comedy team of Zinoviev and Kamenev. Trotsky always despised them for cowardice and panic-mongering. They in turn openly accused him of Bonapartism. There is a saying that real misfortune is born of unnecessary fears. These two by their intrigues against Trotsky untied Stalin's hands and brought about their own destruction.

The undermining of Trotsky began with the weakening of his position in the Army. After the Civil War the Secretariat of the Central Committee removed many of the political workers from the *РККА*. In part this was a natural process connected with demobilization, but it was Trotsky's supporters who were first to be transferred. In 1923 the intrigues against the People's Commissar of the Army and Navy came out into the open. On June 2, a plenum of the Central Control Commission passed a resolution on the investigation of the activities of

the military department (*vedomstvo*). A commission was formed under the chairmanship of V. V. Kuibyshev with N. M. Shvernik as his assistant; neither can be suspected of Trotskyite sympathies. In September, S. E. Gusev became the head of the Commission. He had once been dismissed from the post of Chief of Political Administration of the RKKa by Trotsky.

The Stalinist-Zinovievite apparatus took aim at the leader of the Red Army and hemmed him in from all sides. On October 30 Zinoviev's ally M. M. Lashevich and Stalin's creature K. E. Voroshilov were made members of the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR; two years later they headed the supreme organ of defense. On January 12, 1924, A. S. Bubnov replaced V. A. Antonov-Ovseenko as chief of the Political Administration of the RKKa. Two days later a plenum of the Central Committee of the RKP(b) formed a commission to investigate the instability of the personnel and the condition of supplies in the armed forces. There is a provocative note in the way they phrased their task: it would not be difficult to find instability in an army that had just been reduced to one-tenth its former size. The commission was packed: it included Stalin and his people Voroshilov, Egorov, Ordzhonikidze, Shvernik, Andreev; Bubnov, who had just been forced upon the War Commissariat; the insulted Gusev; Frunze, who aspired to Trotsky's position; also Unshlikht and Skliansky. From the first day of the existence of the RVSr, Skliansky had been deputy chairman and had taken upon himself the whole burden of operational and chancellery work. Lenin regarded him highly and trusted him implicitly. He was included only for the sake of form, as he was intended to be the first victim.

The plenum met without Trotsky, who was seriously ill and had gone to the Caucasus to recover. The Central Committee's commission did not investigate the matter themselves but worked only with material that was presented to it by Gusev. How easy it would have been to predict that the conclusions would go against Trotsky: he had neglected his work in the military department, and his assistants, E. M. Skliansky and Chief of Staff P. P. Lebedev, had not provided competent leadership.

Lenin died on January 21, but the intrigues against Trotsky did not let up even in those tragic days. Stalin misinformed him about the date of Lenin's funeral, telling him it was a day or two earlier. The train on which Trotsky was traveling from Tblisi to Sukhumi would not be able to make it to Moscow in time. (The train along the Caucasus shore then traveled the roundabout way through Baku.) It was officially announced

that the Central Committee had prescribed that comrade Trotsky remain where he was for the sake of his health, since he was so valuable to the Revolution. Therefore, at the moment of the passing of power Trotsky was far from Moscow and remained away until April.

On February 2 the Central Executive Committee (TSIK) confirmed the composition of the new government headed by A. I. Rykov. Trotsky still kept his posts as People's Commissar of War and Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR. On the next day, however, Gusev read to a meeting of the Central Committee a report that was highly critical of the military department's work and portrayed the Red Army as unfit. Unshlikht, Lashevich, Frunze, Voroshilov, and Ordzhonikidze supported Gusev; Tukhachevsky, Kashirin, and other military men had spoken in a similar way at previous commission meetings.

The general public was not aware of this behind-the-scenes maneuvering. Other songs were sung for show. The plenum of the Central Committee, which met March 31–April 2, did not agree with the commission and completely approved the work of the military department. Even before that, however, Stalin and Zinoviev had made further organizational changes. On March 21 Skliansky was removed from the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR.<sup>11</sup> Frunze was made first deputy chairman, and Unshlikht, second.<sup>12</sup>

Frunze immediately concentrated enormous power in his hands. In April he was also appointed Chief-of-Staff of the RKKA, superintendent of all military academies, and commander of internal security forces. At the same time the position of commander-in-chief was eliminated. The point was obvious: to reduce Trotsky's influence in the military hierarchy to a minimum and to be able to show later that he was not needed there at all.

To all appearances Zinoviev was leading the beaters in this hunt. Stalin, who had much to gain by Trotsky's loss of power, did not interfere and remained in the shadows. By the time the Thirteenth Party Congress opened in May, Trotsky had been eased out of military affairs. He was opposed by a monolithic majority formally grouped around Zinoviev, who presented the Central Committee's political report. The report contained vicious attacks on Trotsky and Trotskyism, although not a single word was said specifically about the Army. Stalin emphasized statistics and inner-Party business in his organizational report. It drew very little criticism from the opposition. The General Secretary undoubtedly wanted to appear a businessman and an organ-



izer, distant from the squabbles within the Party. The speakers who followed him helped. Kamenev in a well-constructed speech dissected Trotskyism bone by bone and branded it a petty bourgeois deviation. Bukharin, Uglanov, and Riutin continued angrily in the same vein. How were they to know that they would later be put up against the wall as Trotsky's accomplices?

Trotsky defended himself weakly at the Congress. Either he had not fully recovered from his illness, or he understood the hopelessness of his situation. He came to attention and eloquently testified that one must not be right before the Party; one must share all with the Party, including its mistakes and delusions.

As if he suddenly realized that he had been avoiding military matters, Zinoviev addressed them briefly in his concluding remarks:

The reform carried out in the military . . . was devised at the initiative of the military men of the Central Committee with the full and enthusiastic support of the Central Committee, which discussed this extremely urgent reform many times in plenums and in the Politburo. The initiative belonged not so much to the military as to the Central Committee of the Party. We all believe that it has been properly carried out and that we will soon feel its results.

After his windy tirade with its veiled criticism of Trotsky, Zinoviev mentioned in passing personnel changes in the defense hierarchy: "I think we were right to appoint a number of Central Committee men, headed by comrade Frunze, to the Revolutionary Military Council. *They will help comrade Trotsky carry on his work there* and help the Revolutionary Council forge closer relations with the lower ranks of the Red Army."<sup>13</sup>

Frunze, who was a rather independent and popular figure, gravitated toward the Zinoviev camp. In any case he had no intention "to help comrade Trotsky carry on his work." Rather he tried with all his might to displace him. He was well placed to try. Behind him stood the anti-Trotsky majority of the Central Committee; Frunze himself became a candidate member of the Politburo. When Trotsky reopened debate in the Party in 1924, he was defeated again. In the fall the Zinovievites tried to show Trotsky the door, but Stalin prevented his ouster.<sup>14</sup>

Against the background of these repeated setbacks the retirement of the politically defeated Trotsky from the supreme military post seemed



natural. On January 26, 1925, the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee approved the request of Trotsky, L. D., to be released from his duties as People's Commissar and Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council; they appointed Frunze in his place. Trotsky's removal had already been decided for purely political reasons several days earlier at a plenum of the Central Committee.

Frunze's elevation was accompanied by a small purge of the officer corps. On February 24 V. I. Shorin, who had recently been deputy commander-in-chief, was retired with a pension, deep gratitude, and the honor of remaining on the rolls of the RKKA for life (which did not save him from execution in 1937). The political motivation for his release shows through in the Revolutionary Military Council order: "retired because of the impossibility of further usefulness."

By the beginning of 1925 the Stalin-Zinoviev coalition had severed its primary rival's ties with the military. But Stalin was more farsighted than his temporary allies. He provoked them into speaking carelessly at Leningrad while he prepared another purge at the Congress. At the same time, but in deep secrecy, a more important act was being planned.

The Army as a whole accepted Trotsky's retirement quietly, even with some relief. Their commissar was an arrogant man; he had loved to pose as a great leader. He was ill at ease in personal contacts with his subordinates and not infrequently injured their pride. He was unable to conceal his scorn for fools, an attitude that in Russia was at the very least dangerous. Frunze was a firm leader, but socially more graceful. In some eyes he was seen as a political overseer, but he also had a reputation as a military commander, the conqueror of Kolchak and Wrangel. Only the Trotskyites were dissatisfied with the removal of their idol, but they could do little more than sing a hurried chorus of the song "After Trotsky, Frunze is such a shame, such a shame. . . ." The Army still did not suspect what awaited it.

While Stalin artfully maneuvered in the battle with Zinoviev, planning to open the decisive campaign on the eve of the Congress in December, he maintained emphatically loyal relations with Frunze. Moreover, with the understandable aim of deflating memories of Trotsky, the Stalinists promoted Frunze as the incomparable great leader of the Red Army. But Frunze was unable to make use of Stalin's sympathies; he was more drawn to Zinoviev, and in any case he was not Stalin's type. Stalin permitted Frunze's promotion for two reasons. One was to

weaken Trotsky; the other was to use the new People's Commissar as a Trojan horse under the cover of which he could put his own protégé at the helm of the RKKA. The plan was rather subtle, but its realization, as was usual with Stalin, was rather rough.

To try to dismiss Frunze by legal means would have been inexpedient and difficult; therefore sudden death was chosen. In July 1925 Frunze was in two automobile accidents. Voroshilov disclosed this in the press immediately after the commissar's death.<sup>15</sup> Since that did not work, Stalin resorted to medical murder, possibly for the first time in his career.

Frunze suffered from stomach ulcers. In the summer of 1925, he took a course of medication at Mukholatka in the Crimea, which gave him considerable relief. He felt so much better that he went hunting. Subsequent events are not difficult to reconstruct from Voroshilov's article, "The Memory of Our Dear Friend Mikhail Vasilievich Frunze." Trying to deflect suspicion from himself and his crew, Frunze's successor employed too many details from which the sinister truth can be guessed.

Stalin, Voroshilov, and Shkiriatiyov, a confirmed Stalinist and one of the prominent figures of the 1937 terror, vacationed with Frunze. They repeatedly told the People's Commissar that his life was in danger and that resolute measures must be taken. With this excuse Voroshilov refused to go hunting with him. Frunze's personal physician, military doctor Mandryka, was sent from the Crimea on some pretext and replaced by two doctors, Rozanov and Kasatkin, who were brought from Moscow with a large staff. They observed the patient for two weeks and under pressure from a concerned Stalin came to the conclusion that an operation was necessary.

On September 29, the whole group left for Moscow, the Stalinist trinity to the Central Committee plenum and Frunze to a hospital. Between October 7 and 10 Voroshilov and Bubnov visited him in the hospital and found him in good health. On one of those days they learned from a doctor Levin that seventeen prominent specialists were consulting on the case. Rozanov spoke in favor of the operation. Late that night Bubnov announced the doctors' unanimous decision to operate. Everyone accepted it calmly: "What was there to be concerned about when Rozanov and Kasatkin persuaded us, assured us, that there was no reason for alarm. I believed. I believed as we all believed, as our unforgettable, best of the glorious, friend and comrade

Mikhail Vasilievich calmly and confidently *went under the knife*.”<sup>16</sup>

For understandable reasons Voroshilov eulogized the dead and winked a dirty wink toward medicine. As far as is known, none of the doctors was ever punished.

On October 31, upon his return from the Crimea, Voroshilov learned in a telegram from Stalin, “Frunze died today of a heart attack.”<sup>17</sup>

Voroshilov lied. The Peoples Commissar did not go under the knife calmly, but with great reluctance. He expected to die and asked his friend I. Gamburg to see that he was buried at Ivanovo-Voznesensk. (He was not.) Frunze underwent the operation in obedience to a special decision of the Secretariat of the Central Committee, which relied on the conclusions of the medical experts. The medical opinion was obtained in a rather straightforward way. The medics, who were not Party men, were told beforehand that marked improvement in the health of the patient was expected of them immediately. The question of the operation was decided therefore even before the consultation. Nor is it certain that the decision was actually unanimous. What is certain is that when they did operate, the surgeons discovered that the operation was unnecessary—the ulcer had formed scar tissue and healed itself. But by that time another problem had come up. They had difficulty putting the patient under anesthesia and gave him an overdose of chloroform. His heart could not stand it.

There is an oral tradition about the operation that gives a different picture. On the evening of the day of the consultation, one of the doctors was seized by doubts about the expediency of the operation. He expressed these doubts to Stalin’s technical secretary in the Kremlin. The latter immediately informed his superiors, after which the professor was thanked and sent home in a Kremlin car. On the Bolshoi Kamenny bridge—the old one that was lower than the one now standing—the car struck a railing and fell into the river. The driver managed to escape, but the unfortunate doctor died.

The circumstances and atmosphere of Frunze’s medical murder were used by B. Pilnyak in his “Story of the Unextinguished Moon.”<sup>18</sup> Army Commander Gavrillov, having been cured of stomach ulcers, returns from a resort to Moscow, where he learns from the newspapers that he is to undergo an emergency operation. He goes to an important official, whom he finds writing a book on political economy. The latter informs him, “You must, comrade Gavrillov, otherwise in a month you will be a corpse; your health is necessary for the Revolution.” For



form's sake, consultation is held with two Russian professors and a German. The latter categorically opposes the operation; so do the Russians, but they have no choice: they have read the papers. One of them says, "As I understand it, they want only one decision from us—to operate. He will have to have surgery." One surgeon says to the other, "I would not put my brother on the table in that condition." Gavrilov has a premonition about his death and writes a will, but he cannot violate revolutionary discipline. The operation discloses a well-healed ulcer, but the commander's heart stops under the influence of the anesthetic.

The most damning evidence was given by Stalin himself. In a speech delivered at Frunze's open grave he outlined with characteristic brevity the destruction of the revolutionary cadres: "Comrades: I am in no condition to speak long, my heart does not let me. . . . This year has been cursed. It has taken from us many of our leading comrades. But even that was not enough, and there had to be still another sacrifice. Maybe that was actually *necessary*, that *the old comrades* so easily and simply slipped into the grave."<sup>19</sup>

The Party did not suffer any particularly important losses in 1925, but Stalin's nervous condition is explicable: this was his first experience of this sort, and the risk was great. Later it became easier. This pronouncement by the murderer is worthy of the attention of the author of *Crime and Punishment*.

That Stalin already had, if only in rough outline, a program to make his way to personal dictatorship is tangentially confirmed in his speech at Dzerzhinsky's funeral in July 1926. It begins with the words "After Frunze, Dzerzhinsky. . . ." <sup>20</sup> It was as if Stalin were counting, and for the time being the fingers on one hand were sufficient. And what if what Trotsky said in 1939 was true, that Stalin had poisoned Lenin? Stalin said himself in 1924 that Ilich had been given poison.

Dzerzhinsky's death was certainly timely. The suspicious circumstances of Frunze's death had to sooner or later come under the scrutiny of the OGPU. Stalin might well have feared that Iron Feliks, who was in the last stages of consumption, might show mercy to no one should he untangle the thread.

The circumstances of Dzerzhinsky's death give food for thought. According to the published diagnosis, he died of a heart attack during a meeting of the Central Committee, at which he twice engaged Kamenev and Piatakov in angry debate. The text of those speeches surprises one by the insignificance of the subject matter discussed. It seems unlikely



that a man so sick would find it necessary to speak out twice on such an ordinary matter. It is said that Stalin intentionally poured oil on the fire to drag out the meeting. Finally Dzerzhinsky collapsed before the eyes of his comrades, with some of whom he had managed to quarrel irreparably. Knowing Stalin's ways, one can surmise that medical aid was not given in time or not entirely properly.

Regardless of how Frunze died, in November 1925 the position at the head of the RKKA fell vacant. There was no obvious successor to the People's Commissar. Trotsky's return was politically impossible. Skliansky was dead. None of the purely military figures—S. Kamenev, Tukhachevsky, Egorov, or others—could be considered because of their pasts. By contemporary standards the head of the Red Army had to possess two qualities: a solid party background (a member or candidate member of the Politburo, or at the very least a member of the Central Committee) and military experience. That narrowed the choice drastically.

An additional limitation was placed by the two main factions within the Central Committee. They would not consider the appointment of any of Trotsky's former associates; N. I. Muralov, Antonov-Ovseenko, and I. N. Smirnov were eliminated by that consideration. The Stalinists and Zinovievites would have to agree to the appointment, as neither faction had the upper hand with the Congress.

Who might the Central Committee factions recommend? The first might nominate Stalin, Ordzhonikidze, and Voroshilov; the second Lashevich, and possibly G. Ia. Sokolnikov. From the military's point of view none of these was a first-class candidate; but they met the formal qualifications. The great majority of the Party leadership—the "swamp"—were perplexed. It got to the point that several members of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission asked the military men gathered for Frunze's funeral whom they would like to see as People's Commissar? Tukhachevsky, for one, named Ordzhonikidze.<sup>21</sup> But such questions were not decided by referendum.

Finally Voroshilov's candidacy was advanced. We do not have reliable information on how that appointment was accomplished. There is an interesting legend, however, that is worth recording. At a special meeting of the leadership (it is unknown if this was a formal plenum of the Central Committee) the candidacies of Ordzhonikidze and Stalin were discussed first. The secretaries of the national Communist parties are said to have advanced Stalin's candidacy, hoping thereby to free

themselves from his brilliant leadership and iron hand, which they had felt earlier than others. But Josef Vissarionovich's situation was not ideal. Emmanuil Kviring was slated to replace him as general secretary. Kviring was not an unimportant person: in 1914 he had been secretary of the Bolshevik faction in the state duma; after the Revolution he was one of the organizers of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in the Ukraine; and in 1923 he became its first secretary. The post of general secretary was then considered technical and organizational, but not political. It became political only after the Fourteenth Congress, which met a month later.

If it had been proposed to replace Stalin with one of the great leaders of the Party, then Stalin, through his underlings, might complain of intrigues. But with Kviring it was different. He was the same sort of bureaucratic figure as Stalin. To let the Party apparatus out of his hands was like death to Stalin, but he rose to the occasion. "Of course," he said about himself in the third person, "comrade Stalin will go where the Party needs him. But Kviring will make a bad General Secretary."<sup>22</sup> Ordzhonikidze was allegedly irreplaceable as executive secretary of the trans-Caucasus regional committee. (Beria was still very young, and Stalin did not have another of his own men at hand.) Then someone, probably one of the Stalinists, proposed Klim Voroshilov, an old Bolshevik (since 1903), an ex-metal worker from Lugansk, a hero of the Civil War, and currently a commander.

As usual, the fresh suggestion at a protracted meeting provided psychological relief and seemed therefore attractive. Zinoviev, who was preoccupied with the battle brewing within the Party, apparently did not raise serious objections. Avoiding Unshlikht, M. Lashevich was appointed Voroshilov's first deputy.

Voroshilov's appointment as Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council and People's Commissar of Army and Navy was one of the great sensations of the time. Only twenty-one months after Lenin's death, while the Party leadership was seriously divided, and the country in serious economic difficulties (who knew then that they would become chronic?), responsibility for the defense of the country was laid upon a man whose abilities and past activities, it would seem, made him unsuitable for the role.

Let us try to examine Voroshilov's qualities calmly and objectively, from the standpoint of those times. On the one hand, he was enormously popular: an activist of the revolutionary underground, the first

Army commander to rise from the working class, political commissar of the victorious First Horse Army, and so forth. On the other hand, Voroshilov did not enjoy authority at the top either in the military or among the politicians. Lenin, by the way, did not think much of Voroshilov. And that is understandable. Only recently had he become a metal worker, and he had never studied. He had neither a general nor a military education. The Civil War had shown that he possessed personal bravery and revolutionary enthusiasm, but he had not risen higher than commissar-mass agitator. There were serious failures in his military career. We have mentioned the Tsaritsyn episode, but there were worse. After the unauthorized surrender of Kharkov in 1919, Voroshilov was turned over to a revolutionary tribunal. They did not consider his action treasonous, but they judged him incompetent and decided not to permit him to hold positions of command in the Army in the future.<sup>23</sup> Voroshilov became a political worker. Only Stalin's patronage and Voroshilov's personal participation in taking Kronshtadt helped him regain a troop command. In 1921 he was made head of the North Caucasus Military District and in May 1924 was transferred to the Moscow district. Voroshilov simply did not compare favorably with his predecessors, not with Frunze, even less with Trotsky. No underground songs were composed about him. But soon there were others, official and providing royalties.

We might be accused of prejudice or lack of objectivity. Fortunately we have a characterization of Voroshilov written by a man who stands ideologically above suspicion. This is what Lieutenant General A. I. Todorsky, a famous military figure and a participant in the Civil War, who worked with Voroshilov many years in the central apparatus of the People's Commissariat, wrote:

Everyone knew that Voroshilov was Stalin's arms bearer, his spokesman and mouthpiece. Even Budenny and Egorov, Voroshilov's Army friends, greeted his appointment with no particular enthusiasm. For such military figures as Tukhachevsky, Voroshilov's appointment as People's Commissar marked the coming to military power of an openly unobjective Party leader, an apologist for the doctrine and mind-set of the former member of the Revolutionary Military Council of the South-West Front, Stalin. It was very revealing that in all the years he knew them, Voroshilov never could find a common language even with



Blucher and Dybenko, who were ex-workers like himself.

The People's Commissar zealously employed famous Stalinist aphorisms, like: "We do not want a foot of others' land, but we will not yield an inch of our own," "War only on enemy territory," et cetera. Of course, one could not base a whole military program upon these Stalinist expressions [to take measures to defend interior territory for example; or to work out plans for evacuation, etc.]. The Commissar's narrowly propagandistic views on the larger questions of defense were adopted with misplaced enthusiasm by such of his followers as E. A. Shchadenko, one of the most odious petty tyrants in our Army.

Voroshilov entered the postwar history of the Red Army as a good driver and marksman with a revolver. Undoubtedly these personal qualities were not sufficient for the leader of the Workers-Peasants' Army, especially in a country [then] in capitalist encirclement. However, Voroshilov became famous in the postwar period for turning the whole history of the Civil War into glorification of Stalin, in service to the cult of his personality. In 1929, to mark Stalin's fiftieth birthday, Voroshilov published his work, *Stalin and the Red Army*, which opened a new era in the study of our military history. More than that, Voroshilov besmirched his own reputation as a hero of the Civil War by his complicity in the liquidation of the old military specialists in 1930 and the destruction of the commanders and commissars in 1937-1938. . . .

The whole organism of the Red Army was like an ordinary apple tree to Stalin and Voroshilov. As long as it would produce new apples next year, they would shake it as hard as they liked.<sup>24</sup>

However you look at it, it becomes clear that in 1925 Voroshilov did not possess the personal qualities needed in a top military leader. This did not necessarily portend his failure in that role. Life can be likened to theater, but with an important reservation: life's actors do not have written roles, they must improvise, often in the most incredible situations.

At the age of forty-four Voroshilov could open in an unexpected new role. The Revolution for the time being had brought to the stage people who in the previous era had not been quoted on the political markets, who literally had no value. Who in 1915, 1916, or even 1917, could have foreseen in civilian Frunze, Lieutenant Tukhachevsky, or noncom Budenny the commanders who would lead huge masses of people into



battle and for several decades determine the fate of the country? Even the Commanders-in-Chief Vatsetis and S. Kamenev, and Army Commanders Egorov and Shorin were only colonels in the World War without any real prospect of becoming generals or occupying top posts. Therefore his worker heritage and lack of education did not foreordain the failure of Voroshilov's career as leader of the armed forces of the Soviet Republic.

These considerations were and remain purely speculative. It was precisely in the battles of the Revolution that Voroshilov's worthlessness as a military leader was revealed. He was not swept to the top by the revolutionary wave, but by conspiracies carried out for narrowly selfish purposes.

Voroshilov's appointment was accompanied by numerous other changes in the apparatus of the People's Commissariat and in the commands of military districts. These rotations did not have the character of purges. Their goal was, first of all, to remove top commanders from posts they had long occupied and thus to disrupt relations among them and thereby avert possible resistance to the new leadership. Only a week after his appointment Voroshilov announced a major shake-up of commanders.<sup>25</sup> Egorov lost his post as commander of the Ukrainian region but remained a member of the Revolutionary Military Council. Yakir, who had been commandant of the Department of Military Academies (UVUZ), took his place. Putna replaced Yakir. The commander of the Turkestan Front, Levandovsky, was put in charge of the Caucasus Red Army, which Kork had just left to take over the Western district. The former commander of the Western district, Tukhachevsky, became chief-of-staff of the RKKA, a position until then occupied by Commander-in-Chief S. Kamenev, who became inspector of the Red Army.

Thanks to all these changes, Stalin could be assured during the battles of the December Congress that the Army was busy surviving the reshuffling of its commanders.<sup>26</sup> To a large extent this was done as a precaution. Zinoviev did not have many supporters in the Army and did not trust former officers. That intriguer and panicmonger slept badly nights, tortured by historical and foreign analogies. In 1926 he convinced himself that the Red Army of the NEP period would produce a Soviet Chiang Kai-shek.

Tukhachevsky was very young, only thirty-two, when he became head of the General Staff. Previously he had not had to do any head-

quarters work. His strategic concepts were still very immature. The main thrust of his activity at that time was an attempt to organize the technical rearmament of the Army. He was not able to accomplish much. True, in 1926 the secret Soviet-German agreement on military cooperation was concluded. In contravention of the confining articles of the Versailles Treaty the Reichswehr obtained testing grounds for its tanks and airfields in Soviet territory, in exchange for which Germans instructed Red commanders in military science. In 1928 and 1929 Yakir, Tukhachevsky, Blucher, Timoshenko, and many others attended courses at the German General Staff Academy.

There was nothing with which to arm the Red Army. There were various types of small arms, for which there were often no shells. The tanks, planes, and cars could be counted on fingers. To give the Army the technical equipment it needed, it would be necessary to construct a special defense industry as part of the general process of industrialization. Tukhachevsky wrote about all this in a memorandum in 1927, but Stalin and Voroshilov were too preoccupied to give it the attention it deserved. They were in the midst of the struggle with the opposition to see who would run the Party and the country. Stalin exclaimed, "Nonsense," when he read Tukhachevsky's report. In 1930 when Tukhachevsky repeated his appeal, the reaction was the same. Stalin told him, approximately, this would constitute militarization of the country; no Marxist in his right mind would embark on that course.

Early in 1928 Tukhachevsky wrote the Central Committee and the government: "Either I do not understand general political circumstances, or I am misunderstood by the political leadership. In either case I cannot remain at my post." It is possible that more than pride was at stake, that Tukhachevsky wanted to extricate himself from an awkward situation. His resignation was accepted. Tukhachevsky departed for Leningrad to take over command of the military district.

Between them everything was subject to controversy and debate.

—Pushkin

The Red Army, like every army, needed military science. In the first two years of its existence a fairly extensive system of study and preparation of commanders was organized along with its executive organs. Practically all the professors and instructors of the military educational institutions came from the old army. This did not mean that they brought with them the spirit and mood of the past. On the contrary, most of them had believed before the Revolution that the autocracy and its army could not guarantee the defense of the country. Now in the new conditions they had a chance to establish the theoretical basis for the РККА.

The enormous disruption of the whole structure of life led inevitably to a reexamination of accepted views. Bitter disputes broke out in all spheres. In the Army they took the form of arguments about a unified military doctrine.

This problem had its history. It had arisen after the defeat in the war with the Japanese. Some of the generals (notably A. M. Zaionichkovsky and M. D. Bonch-Bruevich) feared that accepting such a doctrine might pattern and stagnate military thought. Others (such as A. A. Neznamov and A. Dmitrievsky) insisted on the fruitfulness of an orderly unity of views. The Emperor, Nicholas II, summed the matter up in 1912, when he announced to the commandant of the Military Academy, General Yanushkevich, "Military doctrine consists in fulfilling my orders. I ask you to tell Neznamov for me to address this question in the press no longer. . . ."

The discussion was reopened in 1918 in a speech by former Major General V. E. Borisov and was widely debated in 1920 and 1921. In the latter period most of the participants displayed quick tempers and a peremptory manner. The subject of the debate was never clearly defined.

A. A. Svechin's report, "The Foundations of Military Doctrine," and his article on that topic triggered the debate in 1920. According to

Svechin, military doctrine was “a point of view from which to understand military history, its experience, and lessons. . . . Military doctrine is military, and particularly, tactical philosophy; doctrine creates certainty, which is the soul of every action.” He thought it necessary to unify views at a tactical level and through educational programs, regulations, and manuals to reach the “great mass of the Army.” Svechin considered it useful to deal only with a required minimum of technical knowledge and did not infringe on creative freedom in strategy and politics.

Neznamov spoke out again to support the position he had earlier held. He believed that “military doctrine expresses the view of the people and the government on war, in accordance with which foreign policy is conducted and the armed forces are organized.” Such convictions have the scent of militarism upon them, because they make the approach to war (military interests) the foundation of politics. After the formulation and adoption of a doctrine, it is reflected in military regulations. Various other military specialists to differing degrees supported Svechin or Neznamov. But the primary watershed of opinion lay elsewhere.

F. Trutko, a participant in the Civil War and a student at the Academy, posed the principal question of the discussion. He said there was no point in discussing whether a doctrine was needed; we needed our own, proletarian, communist, military doctrine; we had only to devise it. But that function could not be entrusted to the generals of the tsarist army. First of all, they had had more than enough time before the Revolution and had failed to produce a military doctrine. Most important, they did not understand the Marxist method.

After this reconnaissance in force, the heavy artillery was brought into play in the persons of Trotsky and Frunze. Strange as it may seem, these two Bolsheviks sharply disagreed. Frunze’s position was (1) our military doctrine must be a *class* doctrine, i.e., proletarian, i.e., Marxist; (2) its basic tenets must be worked out, precisely formulated, and decreed. Frunze based his own ideas on the experience of the Civil War, to which he attached exceptional importance, often to the detriment of previous military history.<sup>1</sup>

Trotsky retorted to both of Frunze’s points in his article “Military Doctrine or Pseudo-military Doctrinairism?”<sup>2</sup> Without denying the need for unity of view on military questions, he decisively rejected the possibility of fixing them as firmly as standard weights and measures.



Trotsky's view was that if there were not a pertinent paragraph, one must think; but if there existed a paragraph, then no one would bother to think. Trotsky spoke against making a fetish of the experience of the Red Army in the Civil War and called upon his countrymen to diligently study the military arts. He ridiculed the suggestion that there might be a particularly proletarian military science. In general, the People's Commissar did not highly regard the application of the Marxist method outside politics, as this rather famous dictum of his testifies: "Those who think we can arrange work in a candle factory with the help of Marxism, know very little about Marxism or about making candles."

The discussion was carried over to the Eleventh Party Congress, at which nothing was decided. At a special meeting of military delegates, Trotsky and Frunze made reports. Before that, Frunze spoke of the Congress in the lobby with Lenin, who gently but firmly supported Trotsky. Lenin disliked pseudo-Marxist blather. It would seem that that helped Frunze see the excessive dogmatism of his position. In any case, he announced at the meeting that on the question of military doctrine and science he had no disagreements with Trotsky. True, they still disagreed about the character of a future war, but we will discuss that later.

No official Soviet military doctrine was proclaimed. In the 1930s, however, the Army had foisted upon it three provisions by Stalin, which turned out to be more harmful than any decreed doctrine: (1) war could have few casualties and must be fought on foreign soil, (2) we need not a foot of foreign land, but we will not give up a single inch of our own, and (3) in the rear of any aggressor the Red Army will find support in the form of an uprising of workers and peasants.

The polemics surrounding military doctrine were not the only point of disagreement in the military. Therefore the inglorious end to the discussion did not lead to agreement and unity of views. A heated, uncompromising debate arose about an even more important subject, and many military commanders and scholarly authorities were drawn into the argument. Each had to answer the vital question, what will be the nature of future war, and what action will the Red Army and the Soviet government take in it.

It ought to be remembered that this discussion came hot on the heels of the Civil War, and that most of the participants in it had not yet cooled off from the heat of battle. It is entirely likely therefore that the

experience of the Civil War served as the starting point for practically all the reasoning, assertions, and prophecies involved in it.

The subject of the debate has been well and thoroughly described by Svechin. There are two major forms of strategy—the strategy of “smashing” or “destruction” (*sokrushenie*) and the strategy of “attrition” (*izmor*). Svechin admitted that the terms themselves were not entirely adequate; but they have become established in military literature. Smashing assumes decisive action, unrestrained offense with the goal of total destruction of the living forces of the enemy, or at least of taking them out of action. Proponents of attrition see the more skillful use of resources—people, arms, economy, and territory—as the major factor in winning a war. Placing a primary emphasis on physical destruction or neutralization always costs dearly and as a rule leads to the aggressor’s defeat: if we have enough strength when the enemy weakens, we will go on the offensive and defeat him, or he will not be in condition to continue the war and will capitulate.

That is how Svechin presented the problem. The younger commanders of the Red Army led by Frunze unanimously favored the strategy of destruction. Trotsky, without getting involved in the debate, supported thorough preparation for war and warned against neglecting defense. Frunze several times reappraised his position; but Tukhachevsky, Triandafilov, Varfolomeev, and others maintained their views for a long while. The logic of the “destroyers” was simple. War would be exclusively mobile. Success depended on mobility and firepower, for which troops would have to be supplied to the utmost with tanks, automobiles, planes, artillery, and the chemicals of war. Defense was senseless, because there was no defense against such powerful offensive weaponry. It would be best to gather as much force as possible into a strike force and with a series of well-planned strikes destroy the enemy.

This was the strategy of blitzkrieg, which in Russia came from two sources. One was associated with ideology, and here the destructive conception continued the line of our particularly proletarian doctrine. This doctrine holds that: we are a young class, rising and aggressive and the moving forces of history are working for us. Torn by contradictions, the capitalist world will be forced to the defensive. Its destruction is inevitable, as was taught by the only truly scientific theory, Marxism. The capitalist countries cannot be strong in their rear areas. Without fail their proletariats will revolt and welcome the Red Army as liberators.

The other source of inspiration was the recent victory in the Civil War. In that war combat action was carried out most energetically. The larger campaigns were brief and ended decisively. Both sides preached the strategy of the destructive offense, despite the fact that the Bolsheviks, as a rule, not only turned back the offensives thrown at them (as witness Kolchak, Denikin, and Yudenich), but eventually effected the total defeat of their enemies. There was only one sad exception—the march on Warsaw—but the preferred explanation for that was to blame the mistakes of the front commanders.

Such arguments for the offensive strategy were entirely convincing for many, but not for all. Svechin and a number of other old generals considered the analysis of the Civil War incomplete and superficial, and the conclusions hasty. First of all, there was no certainty that later wars would resemble the Civil War. That war—like all other civil wars—was an exception from the point of view of strategic circumstances. Both sides had to understand that their enemies' victory meant not simply their own military defeat but also their physical destruction. Hence the extreme bitterness of the fight and the effort to decide its outcome by strategic means alone as soon as possible.

Along with this subjective factor, objective factors were at work that determined the offensive nature of the campaigns. Both the Whites and the Reds had to depend on unreliable rears: weak economies, disrupted communications, populations tired of war. Additionally, the rear areas frequently changed hands. The front was not continuous, and there were practically no prepared defenses. The density of fire was much less than in the World War.

In such conditions, a war of maneuvering and a preference for attack were natural. In the confrontation with Poland, which did have a relatively solid rear, such a strategy was not justified. The deeper the Red Army advanced into the enemy territory, the stiffer the resistance became; it did not weaken as the preferred theory said it should. As strange an aberration of their class view as it might have been, the proletariat of Poland did not view the Red Army as their liberators. At the same time it was being learned that the Entente's home fronts were sufficiently strong and reliable.

The most serious error was made in the assertion that the Red Army had gained victory over the Entente. This assertion ignored the fact that the notorious campaign of fourteen nations was only a propagandistic exaggeration. The author of that cliché was Winston Churchill, who



proclaimed early in 1919 that he would send that number of states against Russia and take Petrograd by September. As is well known, the campaign of the united forces never happened; the troops of the major powers had been too exhausted in the World War. On January 16, 1920, the Supreme Council of the Entente resolved not to interfere directly in Russian affairs. Official Soviet historiography has refused even until now to recognize that fact.<sup>3</sup>

No enumeration of the fourteen nations, unfortunately, can be found in any Soviet publication. We have barely managed to compile such a list, which includes sixteen countries: England, France, Italy, Greece, Japan, Germany (the voluntary corps of Fon-der Golts), Czechoslovakia (the Czechoslovak Corps), Poland, Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Turkey, Finland, and the United States. It can even be expanded, since the independent trans-Caucasian republics are sometimes counted among the enemies of Soviet power.

Altogether the so-called interventionists numbered approximately 400,000,<sup>4</sup> including the armies of the national minorities on the borders of the Russian empire, which fought on their own territories. The major countries of the Entente were able to send only small expeditionary contingents with limited goals: England, 45,000; France (together with Greece), 20,000; the United States, 7,000; Japan, three infantry divisions (or by other data 70,000). The contribution of the West to the Civil War came down, basically, to material assistance to the Whites.

In analyzing the Civil War, the destroyers changed their accents. They did not understand that the Reds' victory had been gained not only and not mostly by military successes, but by superior policies—the decree on land, massive mobilization, more skillful propaganda and agitation, possession of the capitals, recruitment to their side of a significant part of the officer corps.

These errors, so obvious today, had an entirely reasonable explanation. Beaten armies examine past defeats to learn their errors, while victors tend to exaggerate the value of their actions. In any case, they are strongly tempted to adhere to the strategy that brought them victory yesterday. We must give Trotsky his due; several times he warned the Bolsheviks not to pride themselves too much on their military victories. He pointed out that these had been achieved not because of any great military skill, but because of the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses, numerical superiority over the enemy, and other less-than-glorious reasons.



We have come now to the story of the military figure who already in the 1920s had rejected the destruction concept. He worked out a theory of the conduct of a future war that has turned out to be so perspicacious that half a century later we have little to add. That was Aleksander Andreevich Svechin. Soviet historiography to the present has not given him the attention he deserves, and in the few instances in which he is mentioned treats him prejudicially.<sup>5</sup>

Svechin was born on August 17, 1878, in Ekaterinoslav (now Dnepropetrovsk). Following the example of his father, a major general in the Russian army, Svechin embarked on a military career from boyhood: the cadet corps and Mikhailovsky military school. In line service from 1895, he later completed the Nikolaevsky Academy of the General Staff. Svechin displayed a profound interest in new weapons and in 1909 was sent to Germany to attend an aviation exhibition. He had earlier served through the whole far eastern campaign and survived the catastrophe of the Russian army. From the time of Mukden, in his words, he began a serious revision of his values, which for a man of his position was very painful. His conclusion was likewise discomfiting: the autocratic order did not guarantee the defense of the country.

Svechin spent most of the World War at the front. He was wounded. He advanced from regimental commander to chief-of-staff of the Army. He was decorated with all the military orders from St. Vladimir to St. George, with medals, and with St. George's Sword for bravery.

In 1918 Svechin voluntarily entered the service of the new-born РККА. They immediately employed the experienced combat general in highly responsible positions: chief-of-staff of the Western sector of the Screen (*zavesa*), military instructor of the Smolensk region of the Screen, chief of the All Russian Main Staff (*Vserosglavshstab*), which was at first the general staff and from September 1918 the organ directing the organization of reserves.

In 1918 Svechin also began to teach at the Military Academy. At first this was just one of his duties, but he soon was doing it full time and not long after became the director of the history of military arts for all academies. Svechin was extremely strict with his students. He gave no one points for a proletarian background, military honors, or Marxist erudition. One has to think that even then Svechin had begun to be disenchanted with the Bolsheviks' methods. All the ideological blather, which had no place in military affairs, and the commissar-overseers, who were for the most part semiliterate but were nonetheless becoming

intrusive busybodies, must have been especially annoying. But Svechin could not just stand aside and shirk responsibility. He saw his duty as a patriot and a soldier to contribute to the defense of Russia by thoroughly preparing its commanders.

His approach to teaching resulted in sharp confrontations with his students, among whom were numerous illustrious commanders of high rank. In these episodes Svechin did not stand on ceremony. He could ridicule and embarrass laggards, braggarts, and militant ignoramuses in the classroom.

Svechin was hated and feared, and respected. Even V. I. Chapaev, who left the Academy after a famous run-in with Svechin, apparently acknowledged that Svechin had been right. In his report to the higher command he explained his desire to leave the Academy as caused not by nagging or persecution, but by his own ignorance, and promised to complete his education after the war.<sup>6</sup>

Svechin was a great military writer, undoubtedly the most outstanding of the post-October period in Russia. An extraordinary number of works flowed from his pen,<sup>7</sup> including the famous *Strategy*, a unique and in its day vital book, which ought to have begun a new era in Russian and world literature. But in Russia only the old army intelligentsia recognized its worth, and to Western readers it remained largely unknown. The last publication of *Strategy* in its entirety was fifty years ago. Its author's fate was tragic, in the spirit of his country and his epoch.

Svechin was the first to note that the changing conditions and forms of war had made the traditional division of military arts into strategy and tactics unsatisfactory. "Clausewitz' strategy began to sink into obsolescence the moment cannons came into use, leaving the direction of the whole battle to tactics."<sup>8</sup> Contemporary battle (operation) is unbelievably extended in time and space; it no longer fits within the framework of the old tactics. Svechin detached the strategy of battle, which he called "operational art." The name has been adopted in Soviet military literature without reference to its author.

Svechin's primary interests lay in the field of strategy. He developed his concepts on the basis of a thorough study of military history combined with a sober analysis of international affairs. The conclusions he reached are free of political blinders and nationalistic prejudices. Svechin was among the first to understand that the total and prolonged character of a world war was not happenstance, nor a result of errors by

military and state leaders. The next war would spread across the planet even more widely and demand of every warring country an extreme concentration of all their energies. All state and economic institutions, all the life of the nation would be subordinated to military interests.

In a total war, Svechin affirmed, the strategy of destruction was not only useless but suicidal. It had been suitable for the Napoleonic wars, but the strategy of attrition had replaced it. The foes of Germany had achieved victory in the World War by its application. Svechin is rarely written about in the Soviet Union; and when he is, invariably the stories are fabrications. Some say he invented the strategy of attrition, which is foreign to the spirit of the Soviet Army. Others assert he plagiarized from the works of Delbrück. All of this is intentional distortion of the facts, or at best just a superficial glance at his significance. Svechin did not need to invent his strategic principles, inasmuch as the laws of military art have been known from ancient times and, in general, are as invariable as the laws of logic on which they are founded. The forms of their application change depending on the scale and character of the wars, the development of weapons, and so forth. Strategies calculated to exhaust the enemy were widely used in the eighteenth century, and Delbrück did write a great deal about it; but familiarity with his work is in no way a reproach to Svechin. His great merit consists in having worked out a strategy of attrition for contemporary conditions. He furthermore showed that in a world war attrition is sensible and economic, and apparently the only way to achieve victory.

The dominant view of the time, that the Red Army must attack, Svechin rejected as groundless. In modern war a resolute assault ("an attack of the destructive style") consumes incalculable resources, and as a rule is not justified by the operational gains. Attacking troops always must face the threat that their lengthening lines of communication will be cut, or that they will be attacked on their flanks or from the rear. In other words, the risks in attacking are great, and the value of possible gains is doubtful. In the opening phase of war it is more expedient to keep on the strategic defensive. "A politically aggressive goal can be combined with strategic defense. The battle is conducted at the same time on economic and political fronts, and if time works in our favor, that is if the balance of pluses and minuses is favorable, then the armed front, even if it only marches in place, might gradually achieve a favorable change in the relationship of forces."<sup>9</sup>



Strategic defense might permit the loss of some territory and therefore cannot always be applied by small countries. For Russia, however, Svechin insisted, that method of conducting a war was the most suitable. The enemy would be forced to waste resources to conquer territory, to establish communications, to overcome intermediate defense lines, and so forth. Meanwhile we would preserve our forces until the advantage became ours. That goal must be held unwaveringly without giving in to the seductive temptation to give battle in unfavorable circumstances from considerations of prestige or historical memory: "A hurriedly deployed defense would act least economically by heaping up troops in front of the attackers or by occupying a series of lines in the path of the assault. Saddest are those defensive maneuvers which expend armed forces in large numbers in conditions for which the enemy has best prepared."<sup>10</sup>

It was precisely this wanton course that Stalin, Timoshenko, and Zhukov chose in the early period of the Fatherland War. Not only were they responsible for the country's entering the war unprepared, but they aggravated the extent of the catastrophe. With the country ravaged and perplexed internally, still they chose to demonstrate their iron resolve—in an attempt to save their foundering prestige. In the first months of the war, with dull persistence, they threw millions of Red Army men under the wheels of Hitler's locomotive and still let the Germans reach the walls of Moscow. It is easy to cite examples of the ignorance of our command in elementary strategic questions, but we will not do so in this chapter. It is sufficient to note that Svechin predicted the principal aspects of the war with startling precision. It is easy to believe that neither Stalin nor his subordinate commanders had read Svechin. What is strange is that now official Soviet historiography, led by General Zhilin,<sup>11</sup> has to acknowledge the decisive role of the counteroffensive, which was prepared in the depths of a strategic defense. This is presented as a revelation during World War II, practically an invention of the Soviet command. References to Svechin are, as usual, absent. But surely the generals were aware of his work.

In examining the forms of offensive action, Svechin again demanded the test of expediency and that decisions be well-founded. "The forms of operations—operational encirclement, breakthrough, seizure, flank assault—are not chosen arbitrarily, but are dictated by the relationships of forces and means, the existing distribution of forces, the strength of various main lines of transportation, and the configuration of



the theater of military action and its most important boundaries."<sup>12</sup>

Preparation for attack must meet the requirement of defense, that is, the security of one's forces. Operational deployment can only be successful when it is realized quickly and secretly. The offensive itself must unhesitatingly pursue its objectives, but it is important to recognize in time "the boundary where an offensive becomes an adventure" and presents the enemy a good target for counterattack. In general it is a mistake to assume an offensive formation when there is not about to be an offensive. In that formation the defensive options of the troops are necessarily weakened.

These and other provisions of his strategy sound like common truths. All the more do people who undertake to lead troops without having learned the rudiments of military science deserve no mercy. Svechin did not seek the laurels of a prophet: "Prophecy in strategy can only be charlatanry. Not even a genius has the power to foresee how a war will actually turn out." That he was able to foresee as much as he did adds to the greatness of this remarkable man.

The literature about Frunze is rather extensive, although not all of it is entirely veracious. We have already mentioned that interesting figure above. Here we will discuss only those aspects of the man and his work that are connected with the subject of this chapter.

Frunze was a true revolutionary who firmly believed in the justice of the Bolshevik cause. It is not surprising that he wholeheartedly supported the offensive school. "Between our proletarian state and the rest of the bourgeois world there can be only a state of war, long, obstinate, desperate war to the death."<sup>13</sup> Aggression was the inalienable right of the proletariat: "By the historical revolutionary process of life itself the working class will be forced to go on the offensive whenever favorable conditions arise."<sup>14</sup>

(Such pronouncements put those who varnish the truth about the history of Bolshevism in an awkward position, but a true picture of Frunze can be gained only from such honesty and candor.) The Red Army, the main weapon of the working class, must be prepared to carry out its aggressive mission in any sector of a future front: "The borders of that front are first of all *the whole continent of the Old World*."<sup>15</sup>

Starting from these political purposes, Frunze at first took an extreme "destructive" position. In the main, his views were indistinguishable from those of most of the commanders of the RKKA. Wars would be revolutionary, exclusively mobile, and consequently perfectly suited

for an offensive strategy. "I recommend that except for the absolutely necessary we undertake no defensive work. It would be better to spend the money to repair barracks."<sup>16</sup>

That was in 1922. Soon, however, Frunze began to express other views in his speeches and articles. He was a man with a highly developed sense of responsibility. Pedantic dogma could not replace common sense for him. As he advanced through the ranks, Frunze's strategic views changed until they were unrecognizable. Familiarity with Svechin's book (1923) seems to have played an important role. Frunze was one of only a few Bolshevik military leaders who valued Svechin and protected him from attacks. He never spoke against Svechin, although the latter often expressed open disapproval of commissars, Marxism in military affairs, and other sacred relics.

By 1925 Frunze was ready to admit that the Red Army had not invented special proletarian power and decided to make use of the Army's bourgeois heritage. He maintained that the revolutionary destiny of the working class necessarily gave the РККА primarily an offensive character, but there was little left to his former aggressiveness.

Frunze was getting more serious. He expressed concern that the bourgeois world would long retain its technical superiority. That would have to be opposed by greater maneuverability and "little" partisan wars. The latter was natural in the land of the muzhik, because "guerrilla warfare . . . is nothing more than the military expression of the psychological makeup of our peasantry."<sup>17</sup> Most important was his evaluation of a future war. He no longer spoke about the blitzkrieg and jaunty marches of liberation. "In the collision of two powerful enemies the outcome will not be decided with one blow. War will assume the character of a long and cruel contest, which will try all of the economic and political bases of the combatants. In the language of strategy, this marks the transition from the strategy of blitzkrieg to the strategy of attrition (*istoshchenie*)."<sup>18</sup>

On that most important point Frunze accepted Svechin's concept. Frunze continued to believe that the rear areas of the capitalist countries would be unreliable, but he did not attach much importance to it.

Having acknowledged the total character of future war and the strategy of exhaustion-attrition, Frunze did not fear to make the logical conclusion about the militarization of the country.

The task of preparing to defend the country in contemporary conditions was no longer within the current capabilities of the Army or of the

military alone. This had to become the task of the whole country, of the whole Soviet apparatus.<sup>19</sup>

Of course, a highly developed country can prepare for war relatively quickly and does not need to undergo a long forced militarization. The United States is a good example. But Russia little resembles America, and Frunze knew that well. "We are not rich in good organizers. All of our work suffers from thousands of various shortcomings. Many of them are the result not of inability, but of simple disorder, slovenliness, and the absence of system. This explains why we have had so little success despite our colossal opportunities."<sup>20</sup>

Frunze sincerely feared that these national characteristics would harm the defense capabilities of the country. He was not at all inclined to think that everything would take care of itself because of some natural advantages of the socialist system. Today his words sound like an ominous prophecy: "It would be a scandalous crime if in the face of such opportunities we were not able to place the defense of the Soviet Union on a high level."<sup>21</sup>

If Svechin was the leading military scholar of the 1920s, and Frunze the main figure in the organization of military affairs, Tukhachevsky was for a long while the ideologue of the young wave and the prime opponent of Svechin. At first the argument had an academic flavor, but between 1930 and 1931 it lost that characteristic. We will discuss that later.

Tukhachevsky's early work reveals talent, powers of observation, and, unfortunately, the peremptoriness of a lieutenant. The level of his thought on strategy always lagged behind his grasp of operational-tactical matters. His 1920 essay "National and Class Strategy," despite its title, is essentially a combat manual. In it the 27-year-old front commander enlightened middle- and high-level commanders about changes in the methods of conducting combat operations, which distinguished the Civil War from the World War. Primarily, Tukhachevsky gave practical advice on how to quash various anti-Soviet uprisings, mainly peasant rebellions.

Already in this early work the author let slip many careless pronouncements that had pretenses of universality. For example: "War always has economic causes. Capitalist countries wage wars to obtain markets or natural riches."<sup>22</sup>

Such sententiousness belongs in political literacy lessons but not in a generalization about strategy. Further: "Civil war is waged



by an oppressed class against the class of exploiters. . . ."<sup>23</sup>

Where then does the Civil War in the United States fit, or similar wars in Mexico, Bolivia, Argentina, or contemporary Africa? And where do you put peasant uprisings against Soviet power in this schema? His pronouncement that "the usefulness of strategic reserves has always been doubtful" needs no comment.<sup>24</sup>

His next four works on the nature of future war all had the same shortcoming.<sup>25</sup> We will try not to make unsubstantiated statements. Tukhachevsky wrote, "Getting the enemy to stand and give battle is advantageous for the attacker . . . it is most advantageous to conduct an offensive operation against an enemy who is stationary."

The author's thought is understandable. It is certainly simpler to plan such an offensive operation. But that is all. To speak of advantages is at least rash since this line of thought does not take into consideration the nature and strength of the defense.

His effort to find an all-embracing formula took Tukhachevsky too far. He asserted, "The most useful destruction is achieved by capturing the enemy, since not only does it weaken the enemy, but the prisoners strengthen the captor's rear economically."<sup>26</sup> Tukhachevsky, who had been a German prisoner, clearly did not understand the economic side of keeping prisoners of war. Furthermore, he displayed ignorance of the applicable international conventions. More: "Strategy must make the tasks of tactics easy."<sup>27</sup> It has always been the task of strategy to win wars, not to make life easy on the tactical level. On the contrary, tactics are supposed to serve strategy, which places before it tasks that are needed but not necessarily easy. We could continue to extend the list of absurdities.

In the mid-1920s a group of military men who agreed with Tukhachevsky and wished to reconstruct the Army gathered around him. Among the most prominent of these were Assistant Chief-of-Staff of the RKKA V. K. Triandafillov; Inspector of the Armored Forces K. B. Kalinovskiy; and young commanders of various ranks, N. E. Varfolomeev, S. M. Belitsky, A. M. Volpe, and G. S. Isserson. All were actively involved in the work of military science. All preferred decisive action using modern technical means, and it was precisely in this area that they achieved significant success. Thanks to their tireless work, which was fired by revolutionary enthusiasm, principles were worked out that laid the foundation for the greatest achievements of Soviet operational art in the next decade, the theory of deep operations.



There were other commanders who worked on the history and theory of combat operations. The old generals A. A. Brusilov, V. M. Klembovsky, and A. M. Suleiman emphasized historical research and published a series of excellent works. The former commander-in-chief, S. S. Kamenev, analyzed separate aspects of the experience of the Civil War. B. M. Shapashnikov worked out the theoretical bases for the operations of a general staff. I. I. Vatsetis, a former commander-in-chief, the prominent scholars A. E. Snegarev, A. I. Verkhovsky, who supported Svechin, and A. A. Neznamov, who opposed him, all made important contributions to theory.

By the end of this period an interesting tableau had formed. Intense scholarly work and active debates had brought the opposing points of view closer together. Everyone agreed that future war would be total, that it would become an exhausting contest of the warring sides. This view was adopted by the political leadership as well. But at the same time the old premise hung on: the Red Army must always attack.

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## 12 Psychological Attack

On December 21, 1929, the fiftieth birthday of the General Secretary of the TSK VKP(b), Voroshilov's article "Stalin and the Red Army" appeared in *Pravda*. Kliment Efremovich, a simple man, employed no journalistic evasions but immediately took the bull by the horns: "For the last five or six years Stalin has been at the center of a large, contentious struggle. Only these circumstances can explain why the importance of comrade Stalin, one of the chief architects of victory in the Civil War, has been somewhat pushed to the background and he has not received the credit he is due."<sup>1</sup>

See how simple: his contribution has been overshadowed by the other struggle, the internal Party struggle, and only for that reason has not received its due credit; that is, of course, the highest credit.

Voroshilov did not pretend to elucidate the whole problem. He wanted only to "refresh the facts in the comrades' memories" and also "to publish several little-known documents, to show by the simple evidence of facts the truly exceptional role played by comrade Stalin at the tensest moments of the Civil War."

It turned out, although it had not been noticed earlier, that from 1918 to 1920 comrade Stalin was "the only man whom the Central Committee threw from one front to the other, choosing the places most dangerous, most threatening to the revolution."

Pay attention: Stalin was the TSK's last trump, its magic wand, the man who saved the Revolution when all else failed. It sounds convincing. Ten years had not passed since the end of the Civil War, and all the senior members of the TSK of that time, with the exceptions of Lenin and Dzerzhinsky were still alive. Consequently, they could confirm what Voroshilov wrote. The problem was that as a result of the "large and contentious struggle," by the end of 1929 the men who had been leaders of the Party in the first years of the Revolution had been expelled from political life and deprived of a forum within the country. Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Krestinsky, Sokolnikov, Smigla, and many others were expelled from the Party before the Fifteenth Congress or at

the Congress itself. Rykov, Bukharin, and Tomsky were destroyed as rightists shortly after the Congress. All of them could of course confirm or, God forbid, deny, but they preferred to keep silence. If they were to say anything, where could they say it and whom would it interest? If victors are not judged, the defeated are not believed. Neither could the political leaders of the Red Army raise their voices. Trotsky was banished, Frunze and Skliansky dead. There were still commanders of the Civil War, but we will discuss them later. The people, as they always have in Russia, hearkened to the voice of historical truth and kept silent.

Voroshilov could therefore boldly continue his research. From his article we learn that already at the dawn of Soviet power Stalin possessed those traits of omnipresence and omnipotence that became so easy to discover from the 1930s to his death. Where all was quiet and peaceful during the Civil War, "comrade Stalin was not to be found." But if things were bad, there "comrade Stalin appeared. He did not sleep nights [that was because he preferred to sleep days], he organized, he took leadership into his own strong hand [entirely true], he smashed mercilessly [there is no denying that], turned the tide, and made things right."<sup>2</sup>

That was the thesis of Voroshilov's article. Stalin ensured success in all decisive sectors. It did not matter that Stalin himself had once called Trotsky the architect of the Red Army's victory. Great events are meant to be reevaluated. Voroshilov went on to describe episodes of the Civil War in which Stalin's miracle-working powers were displayed. These episodes long remained landmarks of Soviet historiography. Only in them was the outcome of the war decided; all other events became secondary, insignificant.

Let us briefly trace Voroshilov's account. The reader ought to be sufficiently prepared for this by the chapters on the Civil War.

*Tsaritsyn.* Stalin arrived there in June 1918 with a detachment of Red soldiers and two armored cars "in the capacity of head of all provisioning in South Russia." Voroshilov, who participated directly in the event, described how Stalin immediately usurped military authority. As documentation, Voroshilov produced a telegram from the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, that is from Trotsky, with a note about Lenin's concurrence. True, the quotation marks in the citation opened after Stalin's name, which leaves the meaning of the text open to question. We read in Voroshilov's article: "On comrade Stalin

is laid the task 'to establish order, to combine the detachments with regular units, to establish proper command, to expel all who will not submit.'" First Stalin set about establishing "proper command": "Headed by comrade Stalin the rvs is established [a good use of the impersonal form], which will undertake the organization of a regular Army." And of course: "The rvs headed by comrade Stalin will establish a special Cheka." Stalin criticized and persecuted everyone, especially Snegarev and his staff; but others were not left out. Voroshilov quoted the citation from the journal *Donskaia volna* (*Don Wave*), with which the reader is already familiar.

This ardent but amateur performance almost resulted in the loss of Tsaritsyn. The rvs of the Southern Front, of which Voroshilov had become a member, was reorganized and Stalin recalled, but Voroshilov chose not to mention that in his article, apparently out of respect for the birthday boy.

*Perm.* At the end of 1918 the 3rd Army surrendered Perm. To investigate the causes the TSK sent a commission composed of Dzerzhinsky and Stalin: "The TSK asks the commission to take all necessary measures to restore Party and Soviet work in the regions of the 3rd and 2nd Armies."<sup>3</sup> That would seem clear. The commission was given no military assignments. Dzerzhinsky soon returned to Moscow. As was his wont, Stalin very quickly became involved in military affairs. In particular, he requested that Lenin send three reliable regiments. Later in one of his reports he offered that as his own accomplishment: "1,200 reliable infantry and cavalry were sent to the front on 15 January." Voroshilov needed say no more. At that point he drew a conclusion that was neither logically nor factually supported by his evidence but was apparently politically necessary: "As a result of these measures not only was the enemy's advance halted, but in January 1919 the Eastern Front went over to the offensive. . . . Uralsk was taken."

That was how comrade Stalin understood his assignment "to investigate the causes of the catastrophe." We have already shown that there was no catastrophe, but without one the act does not possess the required glory. "I investigated, discovered the causes, and on the spot with my own forces removed them and turned the tables." Specifically: "on the spot . . . my own forces . . . turned the tables."

*Petrograd.* Spring 1919 saw the Yudenich offensive and mutinies at Fort Red Hill and Fort Gray Horse: "It was necessary to rescue the



situation. The TSK again chose comrade Stalin for the job. In three weeks comrade Stalin was able to turn things around.”

Even without that, everyone knew that Josef Vissarionovich was the greatest specialist in turning points. The same year that Voroshilov’s article appeared, 1929, the great about-face in Russian agriculture, from which the country has never recovered, was begun at Stalin’s initiative.

Whatever the truth of this episode, Stalin’s role could not have been significant. He was sent on temporary duty to Petrograd as the plenipotentiary extraordinary of the TSK (decision of May 17) in connection with the possible attack by Rodzianko’s corps and the Estonians. The attack, which began May 26, broke through the Soviet front and took Yamburg and Pskov. The defending 7th Petrograd Army was unable to repulse the attack immediately because of a shortage of men and the defection of a number of commanders—the mutiny of the forts on June 13. The mutiny was suppressed by the end of June, but no decisive action occurred on the front until the fall. Pskov was retaken from the Whites on September 8. Stalin had departed long before that. In May and June 1919, while Stalin was there, Petrograd experienced neither mortal danger nor a turning point.

In 1919 the then all-powerful member of the Politburo Zinoviev was also chairman of the Northern Commune. Petrograd was his eparchy, as Kamenev similarly ruled Moscow. Stalin could be sent to Petrograd as representative of the TSK, but only Zinoviev could establish order or display power.

*The Southern Front.* Voroshilov was under Stalin’s command on the Southern Front; therefore he devotes a great deal of space to this period: “Spring 1919. Danger threatened Tula, danger hung over Moscow. The situation had to be saved [how many times!]. The TSK sent comrade Stalin to the Southern Front as a member of the RVS. There is no longer any need to conceal [that, undertaking his assignment, Stalin made three stipulations:] (1) Trotsky would not interfere in the affairs of the front, (2) officials not wanted by Stalin would be transferred, and (3) people he wanted would be sent to him.” The conditions sound fantastic and they are not confirmed by documentation. Moreover, Voroshilov himself soon contradicted them. As for sending needed people, that was the natural right of every leader and was unlikely to have been specifically stipulated. Stalin tried to plant his own people everywhere. For example, he brought his friend from

Tsaritsyn, Voroshilov, to the Southern Front. The latter, after the unauthorized surrender of Kharkov, as we know, had been removed from the 14th Army and released from command altogether. He had been entrusted with the formation of the 61st Rifle Division but was unable to lead it after its creation. Stalin called him not as a commander but as a political worker.

According to Voroshilov, comrade Stalin began with the most important job—to change the strategic plan for Denikin's destruction. That story has long since been disproven. Even from the document presented by Voroshilov it is obvious that Stalin simply supported one of the two available plans, Vatsetis's plan. This did not bother Voroshilov: "Comrade Stalin's plan was accepted by the TSK. Lenin wrote in his own hand the order to the field headquarters to immediately change the obsolete directives."

In passing, Stalin created the First Horse Army. But it is strange that the independent Stalin (of the RVS of the Southern Front) wrote the RVS of the Republic, that is Trotsky, a humble report about the formation of the Horse Army, with the concluding line: "Please confirm the aforesaid." The document is dated November 11, 1919. Trotsky issued the order about the creation of the First Horse on November 17, and on November 19 the RVS of the Southern Front (Egorov and Stalin) duplicated the order. That last date is celebrated as the birthday of the First Horse.

After Denikin's defeat, Stalin, according to Voroshilov, became indispensable. The authorities hurried to transfer him to the Northern Caucasus. But the unfailing Stalin balked.

In January 1920 as a result of serious errors by the front command [that is, Shorin] our offensive at Rostov was dangerously held up. . . . The TSK sent comrade Stalin a telegram: "In view of the necessity of establishing true unity of command on the Caucasus Front, supporting the authority of the front commander [the same Shorin; apparently the serious errors had not been discovered] and the army commander [Budenny], the Politburo considers it absolutely necessary that you immediately join the RVS of the Caucasus Front."<sup>4</sup>

This refers to the Bataisk Bottleneck.<sup>5</sup> Stalin understood perfectly well that Voroshilov and Budenny lacked the strength to drag their troops out of comfortable Rostov to storm Bataisk. Relations between

the command of the First Horse and Shorin were utterly destroyed. Stalin was supposed to pacify his protégés. But such a role was not to his taste, and he resisted the assignment (1) on the condition of his health (as if there were a different climate at the Southern Front), and (2) because he feared that “all of these transfers will be incorrectly understood by local party organizations, which will tend to accuse me of frivolously skipping from one field of administration to another, because of their ignorance of TSK decisions.”<sup>6</sup> How could Stalin know that ten years later this very skipping about would be proclaimed an enormous service?

The problem was settled by the nomination of Shorin’s assistant Tukhachevsky.<sup>7</sup> Stalin was assigned to the battle against Wrangel, who was only of secondary importance at the time, but “illness [new?] freed him from that work.”

*The Polish Campaign.* Illness did not prevent Stalin from becoming a member of the RVS of the Southwest Front, the command corps of which had been transferred as a unit from the Southern Front. Of course it was not a matter of his health. It was simply easier for Stalin to work with the colorless and tractable Egorov.

In describing the events of the Polish theater, Voroshilov suddenly became reserved and careful. That is understandable. Warsaw was not taken. To a large degree it was the fault of Stalin, who sabotaged the commander-in-chief’s order to transfer the First Horse and other troops from Lvov to Tukhachevsky. For that, Stalin earned a reprimand from the TSK and was removed from military work.

Voroshilov summed up Stalin’s merits with brief reference to “comrade Stalin’s organization of the First Horse raid.” The ticklish situation of insubordination he settled in two sentences: “The operations of the Southwest Front brought the Red troops right to Lvov. Only the failure of our troops at Warsaw ruined [the plans of] the Horse Army, which was preparing to attack Lvov and was situated ten kilometers from it.”

So that’s how it was. It turns out that it wasn’t the delay of the Horse Army that ruined the storming of Warsaw, but vice versa. Having performed that logical somersault, Voroshilov hastened to change the subject. “However, the period is so eventful, to explain it would require such massive documentation and thorough analysis, that it takes us far beyond the bounds of this article.” It is hard to believe that the dashing commissar has suddenly become the professor-analyst. And why was such carefulness applied only to this one period? Simple.

Voroshilov did not want to attach Stalin's name to an unsuccessful campaign.

Summing all of this up, Voroshilov offers a general, rather confused description of Stalin as a strategist, which concludes with the following pearl: "Comrade Stalin was always a proponent of the strictest military discipline and of centralization under the absolute but thoughtful and consistent administration of the highest military organs." In other words, the orders of the center must be carried out only when one agrees with them. It would be interesting to know if Stalin still agreed with that interpretation of military discipline later when he promoted himself to commander-in-chief.

Voroshilov's article was a heavy blow to the Red Army. The People's Commissar and the Politburo member clearly demonstrated to the soldiers that in the USSR heroes and leaders of men were made not on the fields of battle but in the stillness of Kremlin offices.

It was another warning: All your honors count for nothing. If we want, we will rewrite history. Whenever it is needed.

It was also a spit in the face. They were telling men who had participated directly in the Civil War—men who had been in the thick of the events—*how* those events had happened. Later this became history, the only acceptable account. They had to study the lesson and forget the way they had remembered things.

Stalin, as always, acted carefully, leaving himself an out. If the balloon were shot down, he could always step aside and dump it all on Voroshilov: look, hotheaded Klim got carried away with the birthday celebrations. And anyway, what is important for us Marxists is classes, not personalities. It was a victory of the proletariat. Stalin could do that.

He did not have to retreat or take evasive action. The soldiers wiped themselves, put their hands in their pockets, and gave him the bird. In the third volume of the fundamental work *Civil War, 1918–1921*, printed in 1930, the editors, S. Kamenev, Tukhachevsky, and Eideman, included the following footnote: "From the editors. This volume had gone to press when Voroshilov's article 'Stalin and the Red Army' (GIZ, 1929) appeared. [The article] contains much new information about how the decision was made to direct the main attack against Denikin in the direction Kursk-Kharkov-Donbass. Realization of the plan, as is well known, led to the destruction of Denikin. . . ."<sup>8</sup> There followed long excerpts from Voroshilov's article.



Former commander of the Southern front Egorov wrote in the foreword to his book *The Defeat of Denikin* (1931): "The author would like to emphasize here that the appearance of K. E. Voroshilov's extraordinarily valuable historical essay . . . helped him clarify and supplement several parts of this work."<sup>9</sup>

Here and above we hear the insult, possibly involuntary. Egorov, Commander-in-Chief Kamenev, et al., needed Voroshilov's opus to understand how they had defeated Denikin. It is unfortunate that only a handful of specialists could read that in the phrase. We ought also to note that the military histories we have mentioned were published in runs of only a few thousand, while Voroshilov's article appeared in millions of copies of *Pravda* and was reprinted in huge editions.

In his first collision with the whole RKKA Stalin, thanks to artful maneuvering that was for the time being bloodless, gained an impressive moral victory.



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## The Great Turning Point



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## 13 Personality in History: Role and Style

An apathetic society broken into small powerless elements, while it offers large opportunities for the development of a great power, at the same time creates many problems for that power by making difficult the establishment of state order without which such power is unstable. —Kliuchevsky

The question of the role of personality in history has not been sufficiently explained. It is hard to accept the viewpoint of total determinism, in which the role of personality is clearly secondary, in which it is wholly the obedient transmitter of inescapable historical laws and commands of the time. The opposite view, voluntarism, ascribing unlimited potential to a strong personality, is no more convincing. In particular it rejects the timeliness of the appearance of great figures and the rapidity of their advancement. How can we believe that people of that nature and with those talents did not appear earlier? It would seem that, like disease-causing organisms, they are always present in the social body but that favorable conditions for their manifestation are not. If the conditions are present, they become the creators of history; if not, they vegetate in anonymity or fail to achieve anything. At the same time there is no doubt that each great person makes an original contribution to his epoch, puts upon his time the mark of his individuality. One must also think that the success of a historical person must also depend to a certain degree upon the persistence of his pursuit of a goal—if he has one. Last: all of the above is insufficient if happenstance is not also taken into consideration.

In light of this amorphous and primitive conception, Stalin does not look like the guiding force of Russian history. It is impossible to believe that had he not been there the postrevolutionary development of the country would have taken an entirely different course. And if there had not been a Revolution, what could Stalin have hoped for: to become a prominent provocateur? Did he have the courage and style to be another Azef?

Stalin did not create his own system. That is uninspired mysticism.



The system gave birth to Stalin, not otherwise. When it comes to talking about the complete contempt of "formal" (and every other) democracy, the legitimization of terror against potential enemies,<sup>1</sup> not to mention real enemies; when the punitive organs take into their own hands immediate execution without trial or investigation; when the taking and shooting of hostages is considered normal; when with a flourish of the pen whole ethnic and social groups can be systematically destroyed, it is meaningless to shed crocodile tears over Stalin's so-called abuses of power. The spirit and the letter of the type of law that lay at the base of his power demanded people like Stalin. Such legal norms open limitless horizons to the most pathological aspects of a leader's personality.

Stalin? What was Stalin? He, for the most part, gave that power form. The road toward that type of power had already been taken.

The features of his personality and the circumstances of his career explain why it was specifically Stalin and not somebody else who became the all-Russian dictator, but they do not allow us to conclude that without him there would not have arisen just such a dictatorship.

After the October Revolution Stalin was in a very advantageous position. A representative of the national minorities, of which except for the Jews there were very few among the Bolsheviks, he was part of the small group that seized power. It is worth remembering that he did not become a member of the Bolshevik tsK for services rendered to the Revolution, for they were few. By displaying quick obedience, he managed to please Lenin, who coopted him into the Russian bureau of the tsK. For five years Stalin did not distinguish himself in any way, but he did manage to quarrel with Sverdlov, who had become powerful. In 1917, however, Stalin arrived in Petrograd earlier than Lenin and Sverdlov. Kamenev recruited him for work on *Pravda*. Ilich arrived and scolded Kamenev and his subordinates for appeasement. Stalin did not take offense. The whole time between the revolutions he lived in Petrograd legally and got along with everybody. It is little known that in the name of the Petrograd Soviet, which was then led by the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, Stalin persuaded the Kronshadt sailors, who had occupied the Peter and Paul fortress after the failure of the July days demonstration, to surrender their arms and leave the city. Stalin told them: "You shouted, 'All power to the Soviets!' Now carry out the Soviet's order." Stalin was not impatient for an

armed uprising, and he rather skillfully defended Kamenev and Zinoviev from Lenin's wrath.

In the first Council of People's Commissars he received the post Ilich thought suitable, People's Commissar of Nationalities. It would have been impossible to fill the position with a Russian, and inexpedient to appoint a Jew—there were already too many of them. Besides that, although the Jews were an oppressed minority, they were not typical of the minorities in that they did not occupy a traditional territory. Stalin had written about that in his role as specialist on the nationalities question. His writing smacked of anti-Semitism, but its packaging was purely Marxist, and Lenin chose to pretend that all was in order; it was useful in his struggle with the Bund.

Stalin was fairly quiet, businesslike, and extremely energetic, although not all his energy was directed toward the business at hand. Lenin's trust for him grew. Stalin's military errors were not especially visible; all of the leading Bolsheviks made their share of mistakes at the front. Stalin understood earlier than most of the others that it paid to follow Lenin without bothering to consider where or why, because Lenin was the strongest of them. At the Eighth Congress he fell from grace but quickly recovered. He sided with the leaders of the "military opposition," who fought against the use of tsarist officers in the Red Army. As soon as he noticed Lenin's negative reaction, however, he immediately stepped aside, leaving his erstwhile compatriots to extricate themselves as best they could. At the stormy Tenth Congress he followed directly in the wake of Lenin's battleship. For that he was rewarded with another commissariatship: in the Workers and Peasants' Inspection. The stern and decisive Stalin gained the reputation of a capable organizer.

In this way he became General Secretary of the RKP in 1922. Of course, the post was then considered technical and clerical: someone had to keep the books and assign work to the Party cadres. It was not the work most revolutionaries cherished. While Lenin was in charge, the apparat did not have a powerful role. Lenin would make the decisions, or the Politburo, or rarely the TSK; and the apparat would follow orders. Lenin's illness changed things dramatically. His comrades-in-arms began to consciously measure the vacant purple. The combination of Zinoviev, Stalin, and Kamenev against Trotsky was born. For the time being the distribution of roles satisfied everyone: Kamenev ran the affairs of the government, Zinoviev had the political

leadership, and the secretary of the TSK for organizational matters, Stalin, ran the apparat. It was in this role that Stalin participated in the first congress after Lenin's death. He worked hard making connections, putting his people everywhere. Imperceptibly the apparat crushed the Party. An active Lenin would not have allowed that. He was supersensitive to questions of power. Even sick he tried to oppose the evolution and raised the question of replacing Stalin. But Lenin was isolated from his Party by the very triumvirs and by Stalin—whom the TSK had empowered to protect him from visitors out of concern that he get well soon.

Now Stalin's position was most advantageous in comparison with the other great leaders. So what if their merits were greater, their names more famous. As the near future would show, that was just talk, empty sound. Stalin had real power, connections with thousands of people who controlled life in their various spheres.

Lenin concentrated unbelievable power in the center of the Party and reduced other organs, Soviet and administrative, to the position of simple executors and even powerless attendants. This made way for the future power of the apparat. It was not possible to run the country from the center without a huge bureaucratic machine. And this apparat inevitably turned into the all-powerful master of the country, unchecked by representative institutions, a legislative system, or public opinion. It replaced the former Russian bureaucracy and became even more arbitrary. The apparatchik in his office is omnipotent and all powerful as long as he enjoys the trust of the leadership and keeps his position. The right of appointment and dismissal was strictly centralized in the TSK; as a practical matter it was conducted by the Secretariat headed by Stalin.

The power of appointment placed the Party from top to bottom in the hands of the apparat. No local organization could express its opinion without the knowledge of the higher apparat. The apparatchiks, especially in the middle levels, depended entirely upon the Secretariat. They were concerned not to contradict it and thereby to lose their jobs.

For several more years the annual Party congresses continued to play a certain legislative role. But then the supreme apparatchik, Stalin, worked an important change in the composition of the congresses. Apparatchiks, who had not long before been appointed by him, became the significant majority of delegates. Some interesting documents have been preserved. Stalin wrote the secretaries of provincial committees

notes that read approximately: "Kabakov, I ask your support at the congress. Stalin will not forget you." He did not forget. He had them shot.

The domination of the congresses by apparatchiks is well confirmed by official party statistics. The last published statistics about the distribution of delegates by occupation refer to the Thirteenth Congress in May 1924.<sup>2</sup> For following congresses only social origin was reported. Altogether at the Thirteenth Congress there were 748 deputies with voting rights. In the category "machine workers," that is *workers* by social *condition*, there were 54, or 7.2 percent of the total. Those occupied "wholly with Party work" numbered 488 or 65.3 percent. Within this group only 37 delegates, or 7.6 percent, were low-ranking Party workers. There were 90 representatives of Soviet institutions, 12 percent; 51 from unions, 6.8 percent, 8 of whom were simple workers; 44 from the Red Army, 5.9 percent; 20 from economic organs, 2.7 percent; and 1 from a cooperative, 0.1 percent. Bureaucrats of various stripes—Party, union, Soviets, economic—made up 86.0 percent. In the highest supposedly representative organ of the proletarian party there was one real worker for each twenty apparatchiks, who had the additional advantage of being better educated, learned, and more verbal. The question of who would make decisions at the Congress was not raised.

There was also the enormous material differentiation even within the Party. At that time when a worker's monthly income was the beggarly level of twenty-five to thirty rubles and often less, Communist executives received salaries in the hundreds of rubles. The Central Control Commission reported to the Congress that some Communist officials, bank administrators for example, received up to 1,200 rubles per month. The Congress found that unacceptable and set an upper limit of 360 rubles, which was, however, commonly violated.

At earlier congresses pliant voting majorities had taken shape more or less naturally under the influence of Lenin's unquestionable authority and the blindness of the Party masses. Now they were consciously organized. Democratic centralism had led Lenin and his closest comrades to military discipline combined with unrestrained centralization and the unrepresentative nature of the Party organs.

Unlike Stalin, his rivals held revolutionary ideals (this is a statement of fact, not praise) and were confirmed Marxists (which did not prevent them from carrying on a bitter fight about its correct interpretation).



They were intellectuals, which meant they were strongly influenced by impersonal, ideological motivations. All of them, with the exception of Trotsky, were intriguers and contrivers but at an amateur level. As intellectuals they were insufficiently pragmatic and were unhealthily impatient of others' ideas. This helped Stalin set them against each other.

This very briefly is the immediate political background in which Stalin operated. His success in the struggle for power was determined, however, by other, deeper historical factors. Stalin's dictatorship, which arose at the end of the 1920s, undoubtedly bears the stamp of his personality but in its basic characteristics is a natural continuation of the tendencies and intentions begun by Lenin at the dawn of Soviet power. Those characteristics are in their turn a result of the centuries-long development of the Russian state and of the spiritual and material life of the people.

Indisputably Lenin, with his younger partner Trotsky, took upon himself a gigantic task of state revolution and the succeeding struggle to hold power. This was his greatness as a revolutionary, as leader of the state and the Party. But there is no doubt that Lenin did not get the state or the social order he dreamed of but only that which could actually exist in Russian conditions.

Military-bureaucratic, obscurantist, barefoot, servile, downtrodden Russia, as it was on the day before the Revolution, could not be transformed overnight. The holders of power changed, some of the facades in the empire of facades were torn down, but the essence remained. People remained the same in their relations with one another, with work, with the legal order, and with freedom. The architects of the new life, although they did not notice it themselves, bore some of the burdens of the old psychology. There were more of the old-regime way of doing things in their behavior than might have been expected from revolutionaries, including those of the most extreme persuasion. Then in the 1930s, and even more so in the next decade, Stalin would rely on great-power chauvinism and copy the external forms of the former state structure right down to details, to the full dress uniforms and the ranks to go with them.

But from the very beginning Stalin relied on the fossilized traditions of national psychology. For the people the ideal of a leader had always been a dreadful power overlaid with justice. You beat us, but for our own good.

The people have always been ready to accept violence. That the severity, the cruelty usually left little room for justice seemed ordinary and acceptable. Russian social thought had not yet arrived at the understanding that the tsars' power retained its godly nature only so long as they ruled through laws and in the interests of their subjects. That concept first developed with Tsar Peter. It could happen then that emperors could be murdered by court janissaries but never executed by the people. Charles I of England and Louis XVI of France were immeasurably more humane than the most liberal of our autocrats.

From time immemorial the power of those in authority, the monarch's will, and tradition have all stood higher in the eyes of the people than justice, law, or even religion. Therefore the seizure of power and the possession of its attributes have been the deciding factor in any political, juridical, or even moral issue. Public opinion unhesitatingly justified the victor, the man at the summit of power. If rational or scholastic arguments did not suffice, there were the mysterious considerations known only to the one at the top.

All of this provided exceptionally fertile soil for the growth of a strong personality. The insignificant development of legal consciousness, servile docility, which barely permitted the thought of opposing authority with force, greatly increased the chances that such a personality would emerge. It was natural that such a man would be constrained by few ideological or moral limitations. After achieving power, other attributes accrued: the peoples' love, infallible wisdom, the force of history. The Russian people, who have never so much as smelled freedom, are not prone to resist tyrants. They tend rather to sympathize with strong personalities like Ivan IV and remember their evil deeds with masochistic admiration.

All the popular rebellions of Russian history were incited and led by free men on its borders or by aliens. The Cossacks were Russian only by language and religion, not by ethnicity or, most important, by psychology. Even so-called independent thought, such as that of the schismatics and other religious dissidents, was often stagnant. Oppression is the normal way of Russian life. The yoke of the hateful Mongols is usually said to have lasted three hundred years. It was really less, but still more than 150 years. More burdensome serfdom lasted about as long, from the end of the sixteenth to the middle of the enlightened nineteenth century. We will not try to judge if these phenomena were the cause or the result of Russians' compliance in the face of oppression.

The Russian people's tendency toward or preparation for democracy underwent a severe test in the months between February and October 1917. The old order had oppressed practically everybody, and they were glad to see it pass. Therefore it collapsed. There was no revolutionary conspiracy or organized movement. Powerless, obsolete, deprived of support, the old regime fell beneath the natural pressure of general dissatisfaction. The revolt was directed not so much against monarchism per se, as against particular parts of its structure, which the autocracy did not understand and was not able to change in time. Military defeat, as it often does, simply displayed the rottenness of the structure and sharpened the discontent. It was also important that the old order was unable to digest the rapid economic growth that continued even during the war. There was one other factor, which is frequently ignored. Tsarism had not only created its organs of power (read violence) but for centuries had been carrying on an exhausting battle with them. The bureaucracy, which had slowly evolved from the Varangian and Mongolian system of "feeding" into commonplace bribery, was not an inconsequential foe. "Russia is governed not by emperor, but by a department chief," Nicholas I once acknowledged.

The apparat, the bureaucracy, fought with tsarism in its own special interests, but it remained loyal to the form of government. In February 1917 the bureaucracy failed to defend the Romanovs; it had ceased to believe in the form. Tsarism fell.<sup>3</sup> The old bureaucracy lost its power and position. Its intuitive assurance that any succeeding regime would need it was not justified.

We know well from the experience of other countries that toppling a monarchy does not automatically and inescapably lead to the establishment of the people's power. We are aware also of model democracies flourishing under the aegis of royal authority. Lenin wrote that a revolution cannot only seize power. It must smash the old state machinery and replace it with its own, or the goals of the revolution will not be realized. Before the Russian supporters of democracy there arose a tormenting problem. Everyone understood that it was necessary to remove as quickly as possible those forces that had destroyed tsarism, the old forms of social life and the former structure of relationships. If they succeeded at that, if Russian democracy proved to be strong enough, decisive enough, capable of creative work, then the country at long last could live in a new order, more just and more humane.

Alas! Flesh of one flesh with the people, the democratic community



languished for decades waiting for the change, wrote mountains of books, threw a few bombs, but did not manage to acquire any practical preparation for building a new life. The Provisional Government was created not only by the liberals but also by all of the socialists, including the Bolsheviks, all of whom at first feared the return of the autocracy. This organ of the Revolution chose a strange way to operate. Instead of meeting the real needs of the nation, it preferred to mark time for eight fateful months waiting for the Constituent Assembly, which was to perform the democratic miracles—that is, to take the burden of responsibility from Kerensky. Only very naive people could believe that the Constituent Assembly, which was to meet in conditions of growing hunger and continuing slaughter, could freely choose Russia's future path. The cities hungered for bread, the peasants for land, the soldiers for the end of war. Not many were deeply concerned with the form of government. If the Assembly did not give them what they wanted, they would follow someone who could satisfy their real needs, or who was at least willing to promise. Once the decisions of the Assembly of the Land were made, they would have to be carried out immediately.

It cannot be said that once they were in power the liberals, democrats, and socialists did not understand the needs of the time. But they were too used to saying lofty phrases; in the Russian tradition they did not know how to act with the necessary speed and were scared to death of the responsibility. The Provisional Government preferred to mark time. It failed to provide agrarian reform, food supplies, or peace—those basic conditions with which they might have begun to rebuild Russia. The people lost patience and their sympathies drifted left. The untended power was easily seized by the Bolsheviks, far left of democracy, who immediately established—in part contrary to their own expectations—an extreme right, a most despotic form of government.

The Bolsheviks solved two of the greatest problems at once: they gave the land to the peasants and proclaimed peace, thereby strengthening their position. This excellent political gambling won them the whole pot. True, bread soon disappeared entirely, and peace and order (for which even some of the monarchists had supported the Bolsheviks) turned into the bloody chaos of the Civil War. It must be admitted, however, that the land did remain the peasants', for all of twelve years.

Having pushed out the Provisional Government, the Bolsheviks sat in the old government's armchairs. Yesterday's revolutionaries soon



forget that the people's existence determines consciousness—one of the few reliable tenets of their doctrine. The people were not disturbed that social harmony was achieved by executions and requisitions, that the beautiful building erected in the name of future generations was being raised on the bones of the current generation. Insensitive to their own suffering, the people set out with irrepressible determination to realize the dream of their foolish leaders of prosperity for all through obedience. In a short time they had trampled Russia and mangled it more thoroughly than their predecessors had ever dreamed of doing. In all this Stalin's contribution was entirely ordinary. It is hard even to distinguish him.

Later, after the Civil War was won, the Bolsheviks removed a few archaic obstacles, which sluggishness and laziness had kept the old regime from clearing from the path of economic development. This without a doubt helped rapid industrialization and the growth of military might. They introduced universal education and liquidated illiteracy, something tsarism had definitely not wanted to do.

Economic successes improved the life of the average citizen, but not nearly as much as might have been expected from such a rapid rate of growth. The omnipotent government gathered the lion's share of the new wealth to benefit its great power and imperialistic policies and to maintain the new, greedy ruling class.

Industrialization progressed one-sidedly. It was oriented toward military and prestige projects. The people's needs were at the bottom of the list. As a result, the level of life remained extremely modest, although it gradually improved. For weapons, the most expensive and up-to-date, there was always money. Countless millions and billions of rubles were wasted through theft, improvidence, and ignorant ventures on a huge scale. Finally, collectivization and the ensuing cruel experimentation in the spirit of Swift's learned men led to the collapse of agriculture.

It is time to return to the starting point. Just how much did Stalin's personality influence this history? It is very likely that Stalin's role is seen mostly in the coloration of specific events, in the appointment and removal (usually destruction) of individuals, however many there were. The general course of history after the October Revolution could hardly have taken a different course had there been a different person in his place.

All the same, the Bolsheviks would have had to muzzle and suppress the opposition with their natural multiplicity of opinions and interests. It was not Stalin who began to do that. A collision was unavoidable

between the state, which had seized industry, and the peasantry, which did not want to give up its produce for the needs of industrialization in exchange for primarily immaterial goods. No one could have taken the peasants' land and property bloodlessly. Such repression in a peasant country would invariably produce anger, hatred, and restrained aggression. This was the psychological preparation for the terror of 1937 and 1938. Terror was the constant companion of power, its primary weapon in the battle with its own population from the very first day.

In his concern for personal power Stalin only gave form to this process, but he could not and he did not mean to change its direction. He did not do what he wanted, but what was necessary, and consequently what was possible.

In other words, only those of Stalin's undertakings succeeded that suited the spirit and level of development of our society, the concrete relations of social forces, the psychological expectations of the people, and their concepts of the personality and policies of a leader. We cannot ignore the fact that even today, after the cult of personality has been revealed, millions of the simplest people continue to feel deep sympathy for Stalin. In their memories he has remained the Great Leader, severe and merciless, but with marks of greatness and an inflexible will. A prime component of the nostalgia for Stalin's time is the motif of order. No one denies that that order was expressed not in harmony but in general terror and widespread, cruel violence. Nonetheless, in reminiscences about that time one hears notes of genuine regret. Explain after that the mysterious Russian soul.<sup>4</sup>

It would not be accurate to portray Stalin merely as a willful ogre. He was an unprincipled and monstrously amoral person, a wily and perfidious intriguer, a bloody and callous tyrant, ready to do anything for the sake of power. But as a statesman he was distinguished more by shortsightedness, indecisiveness, and inertia, which from time to time gave way to bursts of energy during the introduction of idiotic innovations, which were usually abandoned uncompleted.

Stalin certainly did not mean to destroy Russia, though he took it to the brink. He did what he did not from malice or insanity, but to keep his hold on power. Like every leader, he sincerely wished to see the country prosperous and powerful, the population flourishing. He worked at that too, although he achieved little because the system he headed was not suited to such purposes.

Historical fortune-telling is unreliable. It is hard to see how things

would have been had Trotsky or Kamenev or Bukharin run the country. But it seems obvious that any of them would have had to act much as Stalin did. If they did not have the stomach for it, the system would have removed them and put the same tasks before their successors.

This is not to excuse Stalin. He was responsible, as are we all, for all he did. It is doubly useful, then, to separate out from the myriad accusations (historical but, unfortunately, not criminal) those that relate to Stalin personally and cannot be assigned to the faceless system.

Stalin did not invent terror and mass repression. Methods of terrorization, suppression, destruction, and expropriation of large groups of the population were known before he took power.

The Red Terror was declared after the attempt on Lenin's life in 1918. All of the members of the imperial family were murdered that year. Early in 1918 the Bolsheviks nationalized industry in the largest seizure of private property without compensation in Russian history.<sup>5</sup> At the same time they took the apartments and personal property (including libraries and art collections) of the nonproletarian elements.

In 1919 at the direction of the TSK a massive extermination of Cossacks was carried out. During the Civil War bourgeois and gentry hostages were routinely shot. Tens of thousands of Wrangel's officers and Greens, who had surrendered under the condition that their lives be spared, were killed in the Crimea in 1921. During the widespread famine of 1921 the government seized church valuables and frequently acted against the clergy. Also in 1921, numerous popular uprisings were brutally crushed, including those at Kronshtadt and in Tambov.

In the early 1920s thousands of members of outlawed political parties, bourgeois and socialist, were put in concentration camps and "political isolators." In 1922 the Cheka exiled from the country a large group of prominent intellectuals.

Repressions were already normal when Stalin came to power. Even depriving the peasants of land—collectivization—cannot be blamed entirely on him. The Bolsheviks had always wanted to socialize the land, which in practice meant state ownership. The decree on land had been forced on them by circumstances. It was a tactical measure to take the steam out of the SRS' political program, and it succeeded in attracting soldiers and peasants away from what had been the most influential party of the time. During the Civil War, without touching the land, which there was no one to work except the peasants, the Soviet authorities took most of its harvest (requisitioning). Only the threat of a



national peasant uprising forced them to abandon that policy and to introduce NEP. During the 1920s they tolerated the peasants as the only producers of grain; but the contradiction, the incompatibility, the "scissors" between state-owned industry and privately owned agriculture was always a problem waiting on the agenda. In a totalitarian state the situation was an anomaly that could not be permitted to go on forever.

When capital was needed for industrialization (primary accumulation), the peasantry was the only class of the population from whom it could be taken. The property of others had already been expropriated. The main result of collectivization was the transfer of land to the unshared ownership of the state. Collective farms were a screen, a palliative, an intermediate form, and they naturally were gradually abandoned. So what if grain production fell at first. What there was went directly to the state, which no longer had to depend on the vagaries of the market and could pay the farmers as little as it liked. Now the harvest could be employed for the highest purposes. Stalin proved to be more inventive than Lenin; he very sensibly figured that there was no need to rely on requisitions, which had always been accompanied by excesses and anxiety, if the state just once would seize the source. There was famine in the country, but the greater part of the wheat harvest was exported. Equipment for new construction was purchased with the hard-earned foreign currency.

It was not as important to join the peasants together for cooperative work, their land having been taken, as it was to turn them into laborers or serfs. Full legal enslavement was unnecessary, but something similar was done. Residents of most rural areas were deprived of their internal passports and thereby of the right to move. Having lost their land, the peasants were no longer economically independent.<sup>6</sup> In the name of these state purposes the most productive agriculturalists, that is, the kulaks, were removed (killed or exiled) just as ten years earlier the captains of industry were dispossessed and routed. Stalin later admitted to Churchill that collectivization had cost ten million lives.<sup>7</sup>

The naive younger generations have the right to ask, wasn't it possible to take the land without killing the kulaks? Unfortunately it was not possible. Stalin's report to the Seventeenth Party Congress contains figures that help us assess the scale of that historical necessity. In 1932 industry produced a total of 51,000 tractors. At that time there were 217,000 collective farms (*kolkhozes*). The next year there were



224,500 kolkhozes but only 204,000 actual tractors. The Machine Tractor Stations serving the kolkhozes had only 122,300 tractors or  $122,300/224,500 = 0.54$  tractors per kolkhoz.

The slogan "to put the USSR in a car, and the peasant on a tractor" belonged to the future long after collectivization was carried out. Still the authorities had to be concerned for the material basis of the kolkhozes. Most of the stock and equipment for them was expropriated from the kulaks. The frightened middle rank peasants, weeping copiously, turned over their modest belongings, too; it would have been dangerously easy otherwise to be taken for a kulak. True, they slaughtered a significant part of their livestock in the process, to eat well one last time.

Soviet writers and artists have invariably depicted the kulak as a grizzly, brutal man with a sawed-off shotgun in one hand for killing kolkhoz activists and a torch for burning the kolkhoz buildings in the other. Probably collectivization could not have been accomplished without the violence. The kulaks fought not collectivization as a process, however, but the kolkhozes themselves, which were being established with their property.

The rural poor joined the kolkhozes without particular coercion, often quite willingly; but they brought to them only their hungry mouths and their inability and unwillingness to work. They were attracted to collectivization by the share, up to a third, they received of the property confiscated from the kulaks. By ascribing the well-to-do peasants to the kulak category, the basest social instincts were appealed to and enthusiasm for collectivization was fanned.

In his greatest acts affecting the national economy Stalin did nothing original. He simply carried existing policies to their logical conclusions. Having said that, it would be unjust to deprive him of author's rights for the innovations he really did devise and realize.

Stalin was the first to so widely apply political and judicial repression in the struggle for power within the Party. Millions of Bolsheviks, including practically all the old revolutionaries, became objects of repression. The bloody war among groups and individuals for control of the ruling Party led to the complete destruction of governmental and state institutions. Even the Army did not escape, although it stood outside the main battles and reliably supported the Party against the country.

The unrestrained violence that the Bolsheviks constantly directed

against the population finally boomeranged. The nation's history had prepared the people for the violence, but still it was not entirely natural. It was carried out by people, various people, many people. Stalin was producer and director.

Even if we accept the existence of historical predestination, still every statesman, every man in general, has a choice (free will) to be a weapon of the inevitable or not. Every historical inevitability is the sum of many factors and processes, not the strict determinism characteristic of geological and physical phenomena. Acts are committed by people. The system, the political order, only creates the conditions and stimulations in which they act.

Stalin sooner and better than the other leaders of the 1920s recognized that in the current situation only power was valuable—not choosing the correct line in politics, or successfully pursuing it, just power. In a totalitarian dictatorship it is easy enough to present any results in a good light. The greater part of the population will not protest but will believe the proffered interpretation. A monopoly of the information media permits failure to be called unheard-of success; theft, incomparable charity; slavery, the highest form of freedom; mass murders and concentration camps, feats of a new, perfect humanism.

The hostile opposition of the ruling class to the people, combined with the customs of collective responsibility and mutual protection, made the whole structure of power permanently unstable. The personal struggle for positions of leadership within this instability from time to time resulted in large-scale dismissals. Stalin's greatness consisted precisely of this unleashing of enormous repressions, of the adaptation of the structure of the state and society, of the whole life of the country to this task. This was his historical role. This is his contribution to the art of state administration.

There were appreciable differences in the external staging of the repressions. The opposition were dismissed to the accompaniment of deafening propaganda. Stalinists were destroyed just as mercilessly, but silently and privately. Sometimes after their murder, either normal or medical, the victims' names remained in the calendar of saints: those such as Kirov, Ordzhonikidze, in all probability Kuibyshev, Gorky, Menzhinsky, Zhdanov, Scherbakov, in an earlier period Frunze and Dzerzhinsky. Others departed life quietly, condemned by secret courts, shot without a trial, or sent to languish in prison—and passed into official oblivion: including Postyshev, Kosior, Eikhe, Unshlikht, Ezhov,

Voznesensky, Kuznetsov. Members of the two groups were similar in their relative independence and their personal popularity. Whether or not they were later included in official histories often depended on the degree of their popularity.

A similar situation occurred in relation to figures of the Red Army. First, the most talented and independent thinkers among the commanders were executed and loudly defamed (in that order); their ranks included Yakir, Tukhachevsky, Uborevich, Feldman, Primakov, and others. Then the more backward and mediocre officers, who had been forced to become accessories and accomplices of the crime, quietly disappeared from the scene; these were Blucher, Dybenko, Kashirin, and many others.

Beginning with the Sixteenth Congress in 1930, the Party and the country experienced a new type of leadership. Previously there had been coalitions of groups. Now there was the Great Leader and his cohorts. For the most part these were people of the second water, the minor figures of the Revolution, who while Lenin was alive could not even dream of holding key positions. They were devoted to Stalin, energetic, unprincipled, and faceless. This last quality permitted gradation. Those who possessed stronger personalities than the others, the brightest of the colorless—Kirov, Ordzhonikidze—had the least chance of staying in the saddle. The exception was the colorful Kaganovich, who possessed boundless energy, an iron grip, and outstanding organizational talents, which unfortunately he used too often and not in the people's interests. Possibly Stalin kept him for his deep personal devotion, which was not shaken by the repression of his two brothers. For any of Stalin's cohort, suspicion of intellectualism was the worst insult.

All his life Stalin remained a professional conspirator. Therefore within the group of leaders he gathered, who were rather servile and fawning, there always operated a small, isolated nucleus. This nucleus not only controlled the planning of policy and of its execution, but its members also continuously conspired against the other leaders, and at the proper moment crushed them.

At first Molotov and Kaganovich made up this nucleus with Stalin; and the operational headquarters, that is, the Secretariat, was comprised of Malenkov, Ezhov, Poskrebyshv, Tovstukha, and Mekhlis. Most of these shady characters became very important men, except for Tovstukha who died young of tuberculosis. Voroshilov was close to this



privy council, but he never became a member. And there were many others who always remained outside: important dignitaries like Ordzhonikidze, Postyshev, Rudzutak, Kirov, Kuibyshev, and Yagoda; powerless supernumeraries like Kalinin; and special envoys like Mikoyan. The nucleus gathered enormous power to itself. All the questions submitted to plenums and congresses were first discussed and decided at meetings of this narrow group. Malenkov, who was responsible for cadres, kept a card file on almost every member of the Party.

The composition of the nucleus changed with time. Ezhov, who worked overtime in the period of the repressions and came to embody them, became expendable and was replaced by Beria. Malenkov came to occupy a leading place. Zhdanov and Shcherbakov, the ideologist of anti-Semitism, became part of the group.

Within Stalin's staff there was another battle. From the beginning of the war Malenkov and Beria gained influence at the expense of "the old men." At the end of the 1940s this pair, with the cooperation or connivance of Stalin, got rid of Zhdanov and his supporters ("the Leningrad affair"). At the Nineteenth Congress Malenkov assumed significant power over the Party apparatus that had been Stalin's. Sick, and having suffered two insults, Stalin tried to regain the initiative by playing up the "doctors' plot." The whole Stalinist guard now came under attack. Stalin began to press them on all fronts, hoping to replace them with new people (by expanding the Presidium of the TSK).

But the old guard had studied too well under the master and knew his habits. In the face of a common threat they ceased their feuding and joined together. Beria and Malenkov worked with Molotov, Kaganovich, and Khrushchev, a protégé of Stalin and a member of the Politburo, but not a member of the nucleus.

Stalin died just in time. There is much to suggest that the conspirators poisoned the Father of the People in the best Stalinist style. In any case, on the day after his death they restructured all the organs of power, that is, they accomplished a coup d'état.

To better understand the nature and genesis of the Stalin phenomenon it is useful to draw an analogy with a Russian classic. It has long been noted that Dostoevsky's penetrating mind saw more in postreform nihilism—and its concrete expression the *Nechaevshchina*—than was yet there when he wrote *The Possessed*. That prophetic novel was a successful description of the future psychology of that particular environment in which the microbiological culture of twentieth century revolution grew.<sup>8</sup>



It does not require much imagination to say that Josef Vissarionovich Stalin strongly resembles Peter Stepanovich Verkhovensky.<sup>9</sup> One can see similar psychological traits and value systems from which arose similar behavior.

The younger Verkhovensky needed nothing in life except power over people, and not just some power but absolute power. So it was with Stalin. The technical difference between them was that the literary character had to explain himself in monologues, or readers would not understand him, but Stalin had to be silent, otherwise he would be discovered. Neither of them had ideas about transforming the world as, for example, Zheliabov and Lenin had.

Their guiding idea was power. Other ideas and whole ideologies were only means to dominance. World dominance. Verkhovensky dreamt of subjugating the planet. His weapon was the gloomy, detailed, and alas attainable (we were convinced) utopian system of Shigalev ("He was a genius like Fourier, but bolder than Fourier, and stronger than Fourier").<sup>10</sup> The cover was the figure of the Roman pope. "All that is needed is that the International agree," he said and immediately added optimistically, "It will happen." Dzhughashvili, the expelled seminarian, chose as his weapon another but not very different utopia. The analogy stretches farther. To achieve domination of the planet, the great leader of the world proletariat was prepared to ally himself to the pope, not the Roman pope, true, but the fascist. On November 25, 1940, J. V. Stalin, a member of the Russian section of the Communist International, telegraphed Berlin his agreement to enter the tripartite (anti-Comintern) pact. It was not his fault that the deal did not last. Like his literary prototype he wanted it to.

Other traits coincide closely: cunning; perfidy; guile; inventiveness and indiscrimination in the selection of means, tendency to intrigue, purposefulness, and colossal energy. Neither was Stalin squeamish about murder, not to mention pseudojuridical executions. When it was useful, he employed criminals. He was like that as a youth; it would seem he was not expelled from the seminary for his politics. Criminals participated in the robbery of the Tiflis bank and in other of Stalin's expropriations. Their tracks are clear in the murder of V. M. Bekhterev. Later, when he had reached the pinnacle of power, criminals became superfluous. More powerful means were found.

Like Peter Stepanovich, Stalin highly regarded the utilitarian value of ideology and organization. This brings us to the *Shigalevshchina*.

Shigalev's social program grew from the discord between his personality and his environment. As a thoughtful but barely educated and impatient young man, he was offended by the disorderliness of Russia. Socialist literature offered him an ideal ordering of life on rational, scientific, and just grounds. But the more he juxtaposed his models to the loathsomeness of the real world, his sterling people of the future to his contemporaries, the better he understood the unfeasible, the chimerical nature of all those phalansteries, communes, and Cities of the Sun. As he wrote:

Having devoted my energy to studying the question of the social organization of future society, which will replace this, I have reached the conclusion that all creators of social systems from ancient times to our 187— . . . were dreamers, fable tellers, and fools, who contradicted themselves, who understood nothing of natural science including that strange creature called man. But since a future social structure is needed right now, when we are all ready to act, so as not to meditate any longer I offer my own system. . . . I announce beforehand that my system is not complete. . . . I got lost in my facts, and my conclusion directly contradicts the ideas from which I began. Starting from unlimited freedom, I conclude with unlimited despotism. I will add, however, that there can be no other solution of the social formula than my own.<sup>11</sup>

At this point readers will be laughing, but in vain. Shigalev was not the worst dialectician. He was not the first thinker whose conclusions contradicted his first premises, or more precisely whose means denied the end he wished to reach. In Shigalev it happened in thought, for some others in practice.

Shigalev's system was comprehensive. In the novel he allotted ten nights for its explication. But the basic idea is clear: one tenth of mankind receives absolute authority over the rest, who "must lose their personality and become like a herd and through perfect obedience achieve rebirth of original innocence, as in primeval paradise; however, they will work."<sup>12</sup>

This ideal seems very familiar, although not in the same words: the dictatorship of the proletariat, in Russia a dictatorship by fewer than 2 million in a population of over 150 million. It is the classless society with true equality, socialist education of the masses, creation of

the new man. And, of course, he who does not work does not eat.

The *Shigalevshchina* anticipated the actual temper of the Russian Bolshevik version of Marxism, which took almost as much from Blanc and Nechaev as from Marx and Engels. When they seized power, they were inspired by the strong and sincere conviction that a small socialist avant-garde (the Party) could in short order transform the life and psychology of the people and lead them to socialist paradise, which because of their backwardness they did not yet perceive. They put no limits on the means they would use to achieve their goal. In the words of the poet, Korzhavin,

Just a little pressure more  
and to man's damnation an end.  
The last skirmish, the last battle,  
No pity for foe nor friend.<sup>13</sup>

We could continue the comparison, but there is something more interesting. With the coming of the Bolsheviks to power, a boundless horizon was opened to the impetuous proponents of Shigalev's ideas. With astonishing speed they created their own theories and schemes, clothed them in Marxist terminology, and with the support of the dictatorship set to work. The whole country, all aspects of life, became fair game for unthinking, fantastic experiments. We tend to remember the cultural and scientific madness, but there were other events and conditions even worse. Here are a few examples taken at random.

Immediately after the October Revolution socialism was declared with the confiscation of bourgeois property, and with equal pay (almost) for any work. A little later when there was nothing to eat, equality was replaced in one swoop with a fifteen-category hierarchy of rationing. As it turned out, the principles of privileged allocation of goods was tenacious. For a long time the calendar was tinkered with: there were five- and six-day weeks, years without weeks or months. In the schools, loose-leaf texts were used, students were taught in brigades, nature was transformed beyond recognition. There were endless campaigns, movements, initiatives.

The social sciences in the country suffered terribly. Soon there were neither sociologists nor economists in the normal professional sense. The same was true of historians. In literary studies vulgar socialist realism raged; in linguistics, Marr's theory of the labor origins of language. Enthusiasts of the new theater won a monopoly and closed such harmful establishments as the Bolshoi and the Mariinsky and

other theaters as well. New artists and sculptors demanded the near abolition of other styles.

RAPP conducted a crusade to make literature an organized productive process, and not without success. Futurists, just like Turgenev's Bazarov, called for the destruction of the classical heritage, to free space for truly socialist literature. This was less successful, but there were some outstanding examples of vandalism. A certain tall poet, who could not yet have known that after his death Stalin would call him the most talented poet of the era, arrayed himself in a yellow jacket and led his compatriots in smearing Pushkin's statue with feces.<sup>14</sup> Enough examples.

Stalin took over the country at the height of its Shigalevian daring. He was a conservative man. Strict authority, inspired servility, and selfless obedience were his ideals. He was constitutionally unable to like the fevered and frenzied innovation. But as a clever, sober politician, he was wise enough not to resist the current. Stalin preferred to live and rule in a Shigalevian atmosphere; and it worked out all right for him. In the bedlam it was easier to grasp and expand power. Therefore, for the time being he remained outwardly tolerant of phenomena he could not help but regard with utter distaste.

Only when his position was unassailable did he begin to tame the cultural wilds, which were no longer needed. In every field an idol of indisputable authority was set up. Again it worked out all right. The frantic restlessness came to a full stop. This was especially apparent in the sciences that up to then had been allowed to operate independently: genetics, agrobiolgy, psychology, physiology, cybernetics. It would be superfluous to speak of literature and art again. From time to time, in accordance with the Shigalev blueprints, convulsions were arranged: the struggle with servility, the pogrom of geneticists, the revolution in language studies, etc.

The convulsion holds a special place in Shigalev's system. Stalin not only adopted that part of his teaching but developed it extensively. As Verkhovensky explained: "Slaves must have masters. Complete obedience, complete loss of personality. But every thirty years Shigalev allows a convulsion, and they all begin to eat one another, for the most part just to chase boredom. Boredom is an aristocratic sensation. In Shigalev's system there will be no desires. We can have desires and suffering. Slaves will have the *Shigalevshchina*." <sup>15</sup>

He could hardly help liking the general idea, but it needed elabora-



tion. Boredom was an unimportant factor for Stalin, and he never felt a personal need for suffering. The convulsions were unleashed not as emotional prophylaxis for the workers and peasants, but rather as a regular means of strengthening the tyranny.

This was not a contradiction. The system created the conditions for millions of convulsions, but the Stalinists took it upon themselves to give them universal scope. Otherwise the little rumblings might have come to nothing or been vented in modest, useless explosions.

Here we end our comparison with Dostoevsky's famous novel, although we have not exhausted its possibilities. Our aim has not been so much to work out the analogy in detail, as to indicate the potential.

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## 14 Attack on Headquarters

Having gained important strategic positions, Stalin and Voroshilov engaged in one more action to fortify their success. This time it was an open attack on the Red Army cadre. In 1930 the organs of the NKVD arrested a large group of prominent military specialists who had served in the old army. Among them were generals and colonels of the tsarist general staff, all of whom had participated in the Civil War on the Soviet side. At the time of their arrest most of the specialists were professors at higher military schools. A partial list includes A. A. Svechin and A. E. Snesev, already known to us. Snesev had been awarded a Hero of Labor medal at the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. Others on the list were the former war minister of the Provisional Government A. I. Verkhovsky; former chief-of-staff of the Eastern Front Olderogge; former chief-of-staff of the 4th Army and the Turkish Front Baltiisky; chief of engineers and hero of the Crimean crossing A. D. Malevsky; also the well-known military writers and teachers B. K. Verkhovsky, Bazarevsky, Besiadovsky, Vysotsky, Kolegov, A. G. Lignau, S. I. Lukirsky, Mikheev, Dolivo-Dobrovolsky, Golubintsev, Sapozhnikov, Seger, Rants, Sokolov, Suvorov, V. G. Sukhov, V. N. Egorev, and many, many others. All of them were honored, authoritative, respected, decorated.

The interrogations yielded little, as not everyone was yet ready to confess to things they had not done. But on the other hand, the NKVD had already learned that innocence was not grounds for discharge. They were sent to camps in the Leningrad region. In the spring of 1932 those who had survived the healthful lumbering were freed and returned to their former posts. A few were later permitted to teach at the new Academy of the General Staff. Among them were Svechin and A. Verkhovsky, for example. A few remained outside the army—Egorev, B. Verkhovsky, Snesev. Despite their subsequent liberation, the blow to the Army was serious. A. I. Todorsky, in a review in the form of an historical essay, which we have already cited, wrote of the arrested professors:

these men were the real flower of the old army in the most positive sense, and I would say to a certain extent the flower of the Red Army. They became part of it, flesh and blood, and were as proud of it as of their own army. . . . By that time all the old generals and higher officers without exception had adjusted fully to Soviet conditions and justly considered themselves active participants in building the new world, inasmuch as they had all been in the civil war and served the RKKA, and service in the Red Army was in itself considered especially honorable.

We offer another quotation from Todorsky's work. It is especially valuable as it is the only written testimony of an eyewitness.

This glaring lawlessness expresses the traditional approach of Stalin and Voroshilov to military specialists, which was apparent from the beginning of the Civil War. I especially remember those tragic days of 1930 when the grief-stricken wives and children of the arrested men rushed for protection to People's Commissar Voroshilov, who without bothering to look into their petitions sent them to me as chief of UVUZ [Administration of Military Education Institutions]. What could I do, one of many chiefs of central administrations, when the arrests had been carried out at the orders of Stalin and with the sanction of Voroshilov? My appeals to the then assistant people's commissar of internal affairs, my good acquaintance comrade Messing did no good.<sup>1</sup>

This is how Todorsky, a Bolshevik from a poor peasant background, appraises the actions of Stalin's leadership. Strictly speaking, practically nothing was known about the charges against the men. It was whispered that these old men comprised a monarchist conspiracy. They hoped, we would have to assume, that they could find the strength to break the power of the Red Army and the NKVD.

Nonetheless, some came to believe in the generals' plot. For example, the former nobleman and lieutenant Mikhail Tukhachevsky not only accepted the Stalin-Voroshilov version, but gave it a military-scientific basis. Today at a historical distance it does not appear credible. We have gotten used to the fact that without exception in all the memoirs published since Tukhachevsky's posthumous rehabilitation he has been depicted as the embodiment of an angel.

Alas, one cannot take the words out of history any more than from

songs. On April 25, 1931, at the Leningrad branch of the Communist Academy an open meeting of the plenum of the section for the study of problems of war took place. The stenographic notes of that scholarly meeting were published as a brochure.<sup>2</sup> Discussion is a normal part of scholarly life, but this one was given particular piquancy by the circumstance that it was conducted in the absence and against the will of a silent opponent. Svechin was called professor only from hypocritical convenience. He was at the time a common camp prisoner who with his academic colleagues was felling trees for the glory of the Five-Year Plan. As is usual in Soviet discussions, all the speakers held the same opinion. The first and main report was Tukhachevsky's "On the Strategic Views of Svechin." Tubs of hatred and lies were dumped on the defenseless opponent. Tukhachevsky proved himself an apt pupil of his great leader and his commissar in the art of misrepresenting others' views and falsifying facts. We will turn to the text of his report.

At first, Tukhachevsky noted, as Chief of the General Staff Svechin fought the Germans willingly, but, "from the beginning of the Civil War he actively participated in nothing. He worked at the Military Academy. . . . His articles, we see, are of an embittered nature and anti-Soviet content."<sup>3</sup> At the height of the Civil War there reigned such freedom in Soviet territory (in the city of Moscow and not much anyplace else) that a former tsarist general could with impunity severely criticize Soviet authority in print and still remain in its service. It took ten years of intensive Marxist analysis to divine the true purport of these articles. Tukhachevsky continues, "Svechin saw the commissars of the Red Army as a basic hindrance to the work of the commanders: . . . every efficient [commander] trying to concentrate on his work is besieged by a swarm of counselors, planners, delegates, committees, busybodies of every sort and rank, blocking his way, taking credit for his work, usurping his authority."

It is interesting that commissars are not mentioned in the quote. Maybe the word counselor (*sovetchik*) seemed politically suspicious to Tukhachevsky? To be serious again, Tukhachevsky found more and more negative characteristics in the old general: "Svechin regarded political work with scorn and hostility. . . . Svechin never was and never wanted to be a Marxist." That was foolish enough, but there was worse to come. In 1919 Svechin had been so bold as to announce: "White, gray, or red army—that is a matter of the taste of the organizers of the armed forces. A red militia, however, is as probable as red bread."



His thought was unorthodox, but it would seem that the old man was closer to the truth than his accuser. Why else explain that Tukhachevsky himself, a progressive from the time he was in diapers, heroically defended tsarism in the ranks of the old army for three years, shoulder to shoulder with millions of simple people who later transferred to the Red Army? Unquestioning subordination, without which no army exists, makes an obedient weapon of command. Was the Red Army used only for missions of liberation?

Tukhachevsky's wrath was aroused by Svechin's assertion that the strategy of both sides in the Civil War differed little because they shared "a common basis of starvation, poverty, destroyed transport, a peasantry tired of war and avoiding conscription." From this there came "a certain coincidence of the basic strategic line of the Reds and Whites. Denikin's march on Moscow in 1919 had its continuation in the Reds' march on Warsaw in 1920." This offended Tukhachevsky personally. He sought support in a quote from Lenin: "just a few more days of the Red Army's victorious offensive and not only would Warsaw have been taken (that would not have been so important), but the Versailles Treaty would have been destroyed. . . ." He does not mention, however, that even Lenin acknowledged that the assault on Warsaw was a political mistake. That scoundrel Svechin meanwhile had the nerve to write, "The Red Armies, as if ignoring the material forces of the Poles . . . went to battle with the Versailles Treaty. That is mysticism, especially in the conditions of [the strategy of] destruction." Svechin believed in the universality of military science, its independence from politics and ideology: "We investigate war with all its possibilities and do not try to narrow our theory to a sketch of a Red Soviet strategic doctrine." Therefore, Tukhachevsky logically concluded, "Svechin did not write his *Strategy* to prepare the victory of the Red Army. On the contrary, the essence of Svechin's *Strategy* is defeatist when applied to the USSR."

Tukhachevsky never did fully understand Svechin's main idea—about the decisive role of strategic defense in modern war. Only small or weak countries, which do not have sufficient resources but which want to or are forced to make war, need gamble on destruction. Five years earlier Svechin had predicted that blitzkrieg would have little success in a large war: "An assault of the destructive style places the attacking army in very unfavorable material conditions. It so weakens the defense of their flanks and rear, and demands such efforts at supply, that only by

winning signal operational victories can eventual defeat be prevented.”<sup>4</sup>

Surely Tukhachevsky experienced this in full measure during the Warsaw operation. Hitler’s armies offered a more obvious illustration as they raced toward Moscow and the southeast.

In truth, he did not know what he was talking about. His general evaluation of Svechin’s strategy sounds malicious and abusive; it was a political denunciation, slander: “Svechin’s theory of ‘attrition’ as applied to the USSR becomes . . . a defense of imperialism against the offensive of the proletarian revolution.”

Touching on economic questions in passing, Tukhachevsky found further cause to kick the disgraced professor, who was not particularly impressed by the wonders of the Five-Year Plan: “It would be a crude error, a cruel omission to forget the huge virgin spaces, in which Dneprostroi and the future Nizhnyi Novgorod automobile plant appear drops in the bucket.”

Of course, the old general slightly oversalted his skepticism, but a good deal less than others exaggerated their dutiful optimism. It is not hard to see that he was only asking for care in evaluating our economic potential. Tukhachevsky was not up to his subtlety. The end of his report is surprising in its theoretical profundity: “In developing military theory it is of prime importance to be properly armed with the Marxist-Leninist method, and in light of this cleansing our military thought of all Svechinist effluvia is a question of paramount and immediate importance.”

At the meeting Svechin was gouged and flayed from all sides. According to the many speakers he was a terrible military historian (K. Bocharov), his methodology was all wrong (I. Slutsky), his operational views were faulty (A. Sediakin). Svechin did not understand the nature of future war (P. Suslov), or the role of the navy (I. Duplitsky). His views on the mobilization of industry in wartime were pure treachery (V. Dunaevsky).<sup>5</sup> It was not possible to say anything positive about the man’s politics (I. Fendel) or his relations with the Red Army (I. Gazukin).

Svechin did have a terrible defect. He did not take the trouble to camouflage his words. He did not conform and was careless enough to speak the naked truth. At the Academy he was unflinchingly strict with his students and did not tire of saying that the enemy would not bother to consult the *Alphabet of Communism*. Nor would he give preference to anyone for his proletarian heritage, political literacy, or progressive

views. For this, the best Russian military theorist of the postrevolutionary period was thrown in a prison camp and publicly defamed.

It remains to make a few, but bitter, conclusions. The Revolution deprived Tukhachevsky not only of officer's rank (which had not yet been reintroduced in 1931), but also of the conception of military honor. It takes neither much intelligence nor a conscience to perceive the dishonor of slandering a man with a gag in his mouth and his hands tied behind his back. That was how, by degrees, a moral climate hospitable to terror was established in the Army. It is hardly surprising that not long after, commanders selected by a tyrant sent their comrades-in-arms to their deaths, although they did not believe in their guilt. And they themselves would go to the torture chambers followed by the taunts of their successors.

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## 15 A Brief Flowering

Sudden, sharp turns at the helm of the ship of state are normal in Russian history. In 1930, for the second time, Stalin scornfully rejected Tukhachevsky's appeal to arm the Red Army with modern technology, which would require the creation of a defense industry. But in May 1931 Tukhachevsky was appointed Deputy People's Commissar and Chief of Armaments for the РККА. This happened immediately after his shameful participation in the slandering of Svechin and as if to reward him for his devotion to the leadership. The reasons probably lie deeper. A new chapter opened in the history of the Red Army, and it was the most glorious in its twenty years of existence.

Signs of a major change were visible in the summer of 1930 at the Sixteenth Party Congress. Stalin, who was distracted by the attacks on the rightists and the report on kolkhoz construction, ignored questions of defense in his own report. On the other hand, Voroshilov's speech in the discussion that followed was notable for its unconcealed alarm. Of course, the Chairman of the RVS USSR approached his task like a true Bolshevik. He spoke in Aesopian language, but for the initiated his message came through rather eloquently.

Voroshilov began at a distance and in broad strokes painted a picture of the condition of the Western armies. The imperialists were intensifying the mechanization of their armed forces and increasing their firepower. The number of their tanks, planes, cars, and heavy guns was increasing with frightening speed. He attached special importance to the quality of military technology. Preparation for war was becoming total: "A country, its economy as a whole—industry, agriculture, and transport, its cultural institutions and its scientific forces—these are the elements being used to prepare for cruel future struggles."<sup>1</sup>

All of this was correct and intelligent; and others, in particular Tukhachevsky and Triandafilov, had said the same two or three years earlier.

Now it would have been natural to turn to internal matters and discuss the condition of the technical armaments of the Red Army. But



such consistency and candor would not have been normal for a Stalinist politician. It was said by a delegate to the congress that "the armed forces of our Union are organizationally, militarily, and politically a reliable armed buttress of the dictatorship of the proletariat." As proof, Voroshilov produced figures on the social composition of the RKKA: workers and field laborers made up 33 percent, and peasants 58 percent. The officer corps was composed of 30 percent workers and 51 percent Party members. What of the old officers, that thorn in the side of the left opposition and a constant object of attack? They were practically all Party members, and they were only 10 percent of the command cadre. The main thing was that in the two years between the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Congresses the number of Communists in the Army had grown from 82,000 to 129,000.

All of this gave great hope and even confidence. But the commissar did not stop there. Mentioning that many military questions had passed through the TSK and the Politburo in the past two years, he suddenly let fall, "But decisions are one thing and acting on them is something completely different." He had no complaints about the TSK or the government, "but our military industry and industry as a whole, as far as supplying the military with everything it needs is concerned, falls down pretty seriously both in quantity and in quality."

The accusation was serious. Worse than that, despite the polite disclaimer, it was directed right at the higher leadership. As if he sensed the contradiction, the commissar promised, "I will speak to these problems in response to comrade Kuibyshev's report, and I will have some unpleasant words for our industry."

Kuibyshev's report was almost flippant. It was sprinkled with promises about growth and progress, the more important of which in coal and metals were not even half fulfilled. The needs of the Army were not mentioned.<sup>2</sup> Voroshilov did not respond to Kuibyshev as he said he would; at least no speech or even mention of a speech appears in the stenographic report. Yet everything was not just smoothed over.

The director of the shipbuilding industry, R. Muklevich, took up the cudgels. He began by saying that in Kuibyshev's speech the general tasks of industry "were outlined concretely, and reinforced by facts and figures." (There were more than enough figures, but as far as the facts were concerned, they were, as we say in our newspapers, unconfirmed. We will speak of that in the chapter on the Seventeenth Congress.) Unfortunately, Muklevich continued, "questions of defense, the impor-

tance of industry for defense are depicted with too large strokes. We must speak about these tasks because under the *screen of secrecy* in some places, in factories, and often in *higher institutions*, *nothing is being done*.”<sup>3</sup>

So, that particular variety of native Soviet *tufta* flourished back then. The reproach that time was thrown right in the face of higher authority. It was little enough that Muklevich accused them of ignorance about military economy: “There is a conviction that the growth of industry will automatically strengthen the defense capabilities of the Army. That is not entirely true.” He explained further that he did not only mean work to increase military reserves, but also the working out of a plan to quickly put industry on a war footing, and repeated, “The simple interchangeability of nonmilitary and war industry, which many people assume, does not exist.”

Among the many who did not understand was Stalin, who did not fully appreciate this elementary truth until the war. Muklevich kept his speech exceptionally dry and businesslike. He had no use for praise and congratulations for the standard successes. Near the end of his speech he pushed Stalin’s nose into the problem once more. “Attention to military problems in our industry is minimal. Necessary preparation for defense is not being carried out.”

Kuibyshev did not accept Muklevich’s challenge. In his concluding speech he left these serious accusations unanswered. Except for Budenny’s stupid remarks,<sup>4</sup> the problem of defense was not raised again at the Sixteenth Congress.

It is evident from Voroshilov’s sortie that even before the Congress someone was applying serious pressure on the Stalinist leadership to review the state of defense and the Army. It is difficult to identify all the people who were raising these questions, but some of them stand out clearly. The pressure was applied in two directions. The first was associated with the technical equipping of the Army and the creation of a defense industry. At the highest levels it was represented by Tukhachevsky, Triandafillov, Muklevich, Alksnis, Khalepsky.

The second group encouraged building a line of strategic fortifications along the western and southern borders, similar to those being erected in Germany, France, and Finland. We do not know precisely who was involved in this group, but most probably it included Yakir, who had returned from studying in Germany, Uborevich, Garmarnik, and several members of the TSK, who were then involved in civilian

work but still had some influence in military affairs—particularly Khataevich.

These were two separate groups, although several years later they did join forces. Tangential evidence for that is Triandafillov's book *The Nature of Operations of Modern Armies*<sup>5</sup> (1929), which served as a manifesto for Tukhachevsky and his supporters. The book zealously defends the concept of a mechanized army and expounds the principles of sequential operations, from which the theory of "deep" offenses was derived. It did not say a single word about the advisability of erecting strategic fortifications. This is not surprising. Tukhachevsky's team at that time much preferred an offensive strategy.<sup>6</sup> They remained faithful to that idea later but in a somewhat milder form.

Stalin, Voroshilov, and their old pal Egorov, chief-of-staff of the RKKA, were not men to make subtle distinctions. Both groups' views were alien to them. They planned to fight simply, with saber and rifle. And of course to attack. Theoretical considerations of specialists could not convince them any more than other intellectuals' ramblings could. At that time Stalin was being proclaimed the greatest strategist of the Civil War, and the other two were his closest comrades-in-arms. Together with Budenny they thought themselves strong enough to conquer any enemy. Only changes in the military and political situation in Europe, the example of other countries' armies, and the growing influence of the fascists in Germany forced them to retreat.

Because the new course was taken unwillingly and under great pressure, it was not smoothly carried out. Side by side with the innovators in the command post sat dyed-in-the-wool conservatives who considered the changes superfluous, almost capricious in the way they reflected foreign practices. People's Commissar Voroshilov spun like a weather vane, attracted first to one and then to the other. Chief-of-Staff Egorov tended to conservatism. As before, the role of the major strike forces was given to the cavalry. Cavalrymen like Budenny and Gorodovikov enjoyed enormous influence. They did not tire of asserting that tanks could not replace horses, if only because Russia lacked roads. There were a number of zealous veterans who would sooner believe an old-regime sergeant major than any military professor. They had fought bravely in the Civil War. In peacetime they thought all a Red Armyman needed was a dashing appearance, knowledge of the manual of arms, and a precise marching step. In this spirit, musters and parades, so very dear to Blucher's heart, were held.



Nonetheless, the new course slowly but surely became a reality. New men little liked by Voroshilov and Stalin had to be admitted to the leadership ranks of the RKKA. Ia. B. Gamarnik, an independent and decisive man and a proponent of progressive views, became First Deputy People's Commissar and Chairman of the RVS USSR. He headed the Central Political Department (GlavPUR). Tukhachevsky assumed the post of Second Deputy and Chief of Armaments. The only professional military man in the leading troika, he headed not only the technical but also the scientific rearming of the Army. Yakir, one of the most thoughtful and authoritative commanders, also became a member of the RVS USSR.

In the first half of the 1930s there developed a very strong leadership group for the military apparat, which was intent on improving the efficiency of the Army. The RVS remained the highest organ of the RKKA. Since the time of the Revolution it had increasingly become a formality of an office, rubber-stamping the decisions of the top four or five military leaders. However, it existed, and to a certain extent it tied Voroshilov's and Stalin's hands. In 1934, under the pretext of improving the military apparat, the RVS was abolished and the People's Commissariat of Military and Naval Affairs was renamed the People's Commissariat of Defense. The new commissariat became the sole commanding body of the RKKA and RKKF (Navy). It received the authority to make decisions without discussion; but Voroshilov, knowing well the extent of his incompetence, did not dare to make independent decisions of great importance.

The rearming of the Army went ahead full speed and well. Toward the end of the 1920s all institutions of higher learning of the technical branches had been foolishly combined into a single Military-Technical Academy. Now out of it were re-created the Military-Engineering, Electrotechnical, Chemical Defense, Mechanization and Motorization, and Aviation Engineering Academies of the RKKA. New Air Force and General Staff Academies also appeared. By the mid-1930s several graduating classes had qualitatively strengthened the Army's intelligentsia.

At Tukhachevsky's initiative a new office was established to develop and introduce new military technology. Outstanding engineers, such as L. V. Kurchevsky, V. I. Bekauri, N. E. Langemak, and P. I. Grakhovsky, worked in the Ostekhburo, the special technical bureau.

They were impressively successful at developing new military technology. The creative enthusiasm of the Five-Year Plan was probably



more strongly evinced in constructing highly developed armaments than in any other field. Tupolev's planes set several new records that startled the rest of the world—including a flight across the North Pole to the American mainland. Soviet armored vehicle technology, which had barely existed in the 1920s, progressed very rapidly.<sup>7</sup> The crown of its development was the T-34 tank, which was unrivaled until the end of the Second World War. Work in such new fields as radar and jet weaponry also made pioneering achievements. Tukhachevsky, Alksnis, Khalepsky, and their coworkers were responsible in large part for these achievements. Not only did they value the research of the outstanding engineers, but they succeeded in creating for them favorable working conditions, a far from easy task. The best military engineers of the time worked under their protection: in aviation were Tupolev, Polikarpov, Iliushin; in small arms, Degtiarev and Tokarev; in tank construction, Kotov; in jet-propelled projectiles, the "katiusha" prototypes, Langemak and Pobedonostsev; in rockets, Tsander and Korolev.

The new technology was quickly put on-line. Todorsky remembered that "in 1932 the Kharkov factory completed two tanks with difficulty [that was in a full year], but in 1935 whole companies of the machines rolled off its conveyors daily." It is worth pointing out that the head of the Kharkov Tank Factory was the Ukrainian commander Yakir.

The troops began to assimilate the technical innovations. The Belorussian and especially the Ukrainian Military Districts were used as experimental proving grounds. It was in the Ukraine that the famous maneuvers of 1935 and 1936 were conducted in the presence of foreign observers. Besides the English, French, and Czechs, there were also Italians. The maneuvers had a two-fold purpose. First of all, they were an exercise in cooperation of the new tank, aviation, and airborne troops with the infantry. Yakir deserves the credit for coordinating their movements and instructing the units in these new skills. He was an outstanding practitioner of military organization but unfortunately left behind no written works. At this time he worked very closely with Tukhachevsky, the apostle of the mechanized army offensive. Yakir, while he agreed fully about the importance of technology, preferred strategic defense. Besides the line of fortifications in which he was involved, it was due to his efforts that a network of partisan bases was established in case of enemy occupation. This project died an early death before the start of the Second World War.

Yakir's defensive sympathies, in this case supported by Tukhachevsky,

determined the character of the maneuvers of 1935, which were called "Battle for Kiev." The "Red" troops, fully armed with modern technology, skillfully defended the city from an enemy attack. Documentary films of the maneuvers became very popular.

The second purpose of the exercises was to demonstrate to the West the might of the RKKA. The foreign observers were startled. The world press buzzed with reports of Soviet strength.

Over the next several years powerful, permanent fortifications were constructed in the Ukrainian and Belorussian military districts. Uborevich and especially Yakir were closely involved with them. One can question the practical value of such fortifications in general, but as an example of the art these were not in any way inferior to the Maginot and Mannerheim lines. Unfortunately they were not tested in war. Stalin in his wisdom thought to disarm them before the war began.

Side by side with these changes, military theory developed rapidly and fruitfully. The most noticeable results were produced in the fields of tactics and operational skills. Here the Soviet school kept pace with all of Europe and in some cases outstripped the Europeans. The theory of "deep operations" crowned the thought of the period. Tukhachevsky, N. N. Movchin, N. E. Varfolomeev, V. K. Triandafillov, and B. K. Kalinovsky (the last two died in 1931 in a plane crash) had laid the ground for that work with their ideas of "sequential operations" in the 1920s. It was carried further by a group of able and energetic theoreticians led by G. S. Isserson.

Inasmuch as the offensive was considered the basic form of combat activity of the RKKA, the theory began with offensive operations. At this point we must make a brief digression. Although the forms of conducting war have undergone many radical changes in human history, the logical principles at its foundation were discovered long ago. This is particularly true of tactics, the art of organizing battle, direct armed conflict. Thus in the fourth century B.C. the Theban general Epaminondas applied a concentration of his forces against a vulnerable point in his foe's formation. Two-and-a-half thousand years ago Hannibal faced the formidable Romans at Cannae with (to use its modern name) an operational pocket. Both of these principles remain effective. When they were working out their theory of deep operations, the Soviet theoreticians made them applicable to modern weaponry.

The enemy's front, even if it is continuous, unavoidably has weak places, usually where the flanks of adjoining units meet. This deter-

mines the direction of the main strike, where troops must be concentrated to outman the enemy troops and weaponry by three to five times and must be disposed three or four echelons deep. The breakthrough of the tactical zone of defense begins with a massive artillery bombardment of the sector selected for attack. Then the infantry with its direct support tanks accomplishes the breakthrough and consolidates its hold to allow the second echelon, the sappers, to make the defense zone passable for the mobile units. Then mechanized and cavalry corps, which had not participated in the first wave, are thrown against the enemy's operational deep defenses. There should theoretically be several of these sectors along a front, one for every army or group. The theory postulated is that such operational breakthroughs by mobile units, supported by airborne landings, will lead to surrounding and destroying considerable forces of the enemy and finally to seriously weakening his combat potential.

For the time, this was an original theory of offense. It was worked out in the maneuvers of the 1930s with mechanized corps and large airborne formations, both of which branches of service were first established and tested in the RKKA. The young Soviet theoreticians became pioneers in solving some of the problems of attack in future war. It should be noted, however, that the theory they created was neither complete nor mature.

We give here only a condensed summary of the basic premises of deep operations, based on the writing of one of its creators, G. S. Isserson. Other interesting developments of the period, for example the ideas and principles of organizing and employing large units of mechanized forces, have too specialized a character to discuss here.<sup>8</sup>

Isserson very colorfully described the essence of deep operations: "from an exhausting, crawling, sequential overcoming of resistance by fire bit by bit, stage by stage, we have arrived at the simultaneous containment and suppression of the whole tactical depth of the enemy. With one simultaneous, completely overwhelming strike we will break and destroy opposing resistance. This solves the problem of overcoming the fire front in all its depth."<sup>9</sup> Such a radical approach was a reaction to the excruciating, muddy trench war of 1914–18, in which the main factors were powerful defense works, the spreading of the front to natural limits, and the insufficient striking power of attackers. It was thought that fronts would be as continuous in the next war and more deeply echeloned. To effectively use the increased strength—both



striking and mechanized— of the offensive, it was decided to resort to deeply echeloned offensive formations: “Modern operations are operations in depth. They must be planned in their whole depth and prepared to overcome the whole depth [of the enemy] . . . a linear strategy of one wave of operational efforts cannot solve the problem of offense.”<sup>10</sup>

The goal can no longer be reached by a single strike or battle. Operations will be complex. They will become a planned sequence of deep strikes. Extensive planning will precede every operation. That stage will be fully controlled; it is almost entirely in the hands of the commander. “The greatest pressure and crisis can be expected at the end.” The character of battle: “It will be a solid sea of fire and battle, which spread widely across the front in the [First] World War, and which will spread through the whole depth in future war.” He who at the moment of crisis in the slaughter proves stronger and better organized will win: “an offensive must become like a whole series of waves, which with increasing force beat against the shore, to wipe it away, to destroy it with ceaseless blows from the depths. A modern, complex, deep operation is not decided by one simultaneous blow of coinciding efforts. It requires the deep, operational layering of these efforts, which must become stronger as the moment of victory comes nearer.”<sup>11</sup>

It is easy to see that this conception leaves no room for art, skill, or efforts to outfox the enemy and catch him off guard. “Reason lies at the foundation of military operations,” Clausewitz once said. Here power, will, organization, and purposefulness are all. The goal is the physical suppression and literal destruction of the enemy. The method must be a programmed series of crushing frontal attacks. In this “sea of battle” the victor is he who possesses the stronger forehead and fist.

It would be a mistake, however, to see the theory of deep operations simply as mechanized violence. It accurately reflected, in a concentrated form, the tendency of military thought of the 1930s. The Germans employed it with great success in Poland and France. In 1943–45 Soviet troops frequently inflicted deeply echeloned strikes. The problem was that it was promoted as universal, as the only possible method of conducting combat operations. Moreover, it contained flaws, which its proponents tried not to see. In the absence of decisive superiority over the enemy, in the face of the skill and mobility of his defense over a large strategic area, the attacker would achieve victory, but would at the same time make himself extremely vulnerable. Every boxer knows that it is when he tries to deliver the knockout punch that he is himself



most open. If the punch does not land, the opponent can move in easily with counterpunches. Svechin had already applied that analogy to strategy in the 1920s, but no one cared to listen to him. The creators of the deep operation only rarely, reluctantly, and in passing mentioned defense. And in those instances their colorful, energetic language suddenly became dull and lifeless. They were utterly silent about the cost of any offensive. We, however, will have to touch upon those dull subjects.

Even a fleeting acquaintance with the theory of deep operations suffices to isolate its principal traits. It is extremely aggressive and exclusively straightforward. It starts with an assumption of overwhelming superiority for the attacker and does not take losses into account. The reasons, of course, are not to be found in the bloodthirstiness of the theoreticians, but in their professed strategic ideology. He who believes in the strategy of destruction (*blitzkrieg* in German) cannot come to other conclusions about operations and tactics. The only acceptable act was to grind the enemy and his defenses to powder. What this frontal approach might cost in modern warfare did not interest the doctrine's creators. They had already proclaimed that flanking attacks would be rare, and frontal attacks the rule. There was nothing left but to beat one's head against the nearest defensive wall.

The Germans thought in the same way. Looking back over three decades, Isserson noted that Guderian had preached the same methods of breaking through prepared defenses with tanks in 1937 that Soviet theoreticians had introduced in 1932 and 1933. That is close to the truth, but what is more important than the priority of authorship is that the methods of deep operations were extensively applied in the Second World War. They yielded individual operational fruits, but their cost, as a rule, was extremely high. They were paid for by strategic exhaustion.

Tukhachevsky, Triandafillov, and Isserson heatedly refuted Svechin's conclusions about the advantages of mobile, strategic defense in a large war. Svechin was liquidated in 1938, but his conclusions were confirmed. Hitler and the Japanese did fine while they were fighting weak or unprepared countries. But then in total war, assaults in the *blitzkrieg* style failed, despite their stunning successes at the outset. German troops mastered Western Europe; invaded Africa; occupied the Balkans and Scandinavia; seized Poland, the Ukraine, Belorussia, the Baltic countries, and almost half of European Russia. They pushed almost to Moscow and Leningrad, broke through to the Volga, threatened Trans-

caucasia—and ended in unconditional surrender. The same fate awaited Japan, which at one time controlled enormous territory in East and Southeast Asia and almost all of the Pacific Ocean basin.

Even more strongly than these generally known facts, another circumstance supports Svechin's concept. Superaggressive Germany was forced in 1943 to change from deep operations to strategic defense; then the Germans held out for two years, fighting almost alone against the world. B. Liddell Hart, the most prominent military theoretician in the West, came to this conclusion at the end of the Second World War:

When account is taken of the shrinkage of the German forces, and of their material resources, it appears almost a miracle that their resistance lasted as long as it did, when stretched over so wide a circumference . . . it was, above all, proof of the immense inherent strength of modern defense. On any orthodox military calculation the German forces were inadequate to resist for even a week the weight of attacking power which they withstood for many months. When they could hold frontages of reasonable proportion to their strength, they frequently beat off attacks delivered with a superiority of a force of over six to one, and sometimes over twelve to one. . . .

If Germany's opponents had recognized that condition in advance, and had themselves prepared to meet aggression in a way suited to make the most of the defensive advantage, the world would have been saved immense trouble and tragedy. Long ago, that famous pugilist, Jem Mace, summed up all his experience of the ring in the maxim: "Let 'em come to ye, and they'll beat theirselves." The truth of Jem Mace's maxim became the outstanding tactical lesson of the battlefields in Africa, Russia, and Western Europe. With growing experience all skillful commanders sought to profit by the power of the defensive, even when on the offensive.<sup>12</sup>

We might be criticized in that it is easy to find fault in hindsight. But here Isserson can help us. This important military writer, who miraculously survived Stalin's purges, in the mid-1960s published a retrospective survey, which includes many bitter admissions.<sup>13</sup>

Most importantly he asserts that the theory of "deep operations" developed independently of strategy:

The theory of deep operations reached the level of development it did in 1936, when it was no longer possible to exclude the strategic sphere of its application, and when only strategic scale and circumstances in the whole theater of military operations might give it intelligent meaning, purposeful and justified by conditions of the time. . . . In other words, to turn the scheme of deep operations into a real phenomenon, it was necessary to put it against a strategic background and breathe strategic content into it.

It should be said that the strategy of destruction, the spirit of which fills the theory of deep operations, was not worked out in the same sense as Svechin's doctrine but was merely proclaimed. We might object to Isserson, arguing that it would be more fruitful to first formulate and interpret strategic principles and then be guided by them in developing campaign tactics. That would be superfluous, however, as neither was done at the time.

In 1936 the operations department of the Frunze Academy was made into the Academy of the General Staff. But "this changed nothing in the system of our higher military education in relation to strategy." Why? Surely the Academy had been formed to prepare a higher—that is strategic—cadre. As for how that was done:

the slightest hint that it was necessary in one form or another to introduce into the Academy a course on strategy as the basis of campaign tactics ran into objections from on high. When this question was raised at a meeting before the Academy was opened, the Chief of the General Staff, Marshal Egorov, directly questioned representatives of the Academy in an exasperated voice: "And what sort of strategy will you study? The plan of war? Strategic deployment? The conduct of war? No one is going to let you do that, because that is the business of the General Staff."

When he put it that way, of course, no one was going to protest. . . .

If strategy in this manner was to be the personal property of Stalin, Voroshilov, and Egorov, then the blindness of campaign tactics was inevitable. Stalin and his stooges thought of war only as "a little blood on foreign territory" and did not care to hear about defense in any form. The higher commanders, carefully trained in their stupidity,

relied exclusively on the deep destructive strike and ignored a multiplicity of aspects of combat conditions. This was true also of their beloved offensive:

It was assumed that the initial strategic deployment would form a solid front, which would have to be broken through and necessarily by a frontal assault. From the point of view of the calculation of forces and the capacity of the theater that was generally true. But that did not take into consideration the new potentials of motorized-mechanized forces to broach the front before it has time to be organized and established.

Without doubt this refers to the German success of 1941. Questions of strategic deployment in the earlier phases of war and the action of invasion groups Egorov interpreted in the old way, in the spirit of the First World War. Tukhachevsky protested energetically but unsuccessfully against this approach. Observing rapidly arming Germany, which revealed itself in 1935, he began to understand that blitzkrieg alone would not be enough. They would have to concern themselves as quickly as possible with preparing strategic defense.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, things were not going well with the methods of defense on either the strategic or the operational level.

Throughout the history of the Frunze Military Academy and the Academy of the General Staff, the topic "The Army and Defense" was never thoroughly investigated. Our tactical defense was well worked out and occupied the place it should in all our field manuals. But it seemed almost to contradict our offensive doctrine and it was considered somehow indecent to discuss defense of the Army over a significant sector of a theater of military operations.

Only after most of the commanders had been liquidated was a timid attempt made to do something about defense. The Academy published *The Foundation of Defensive Operations* in 1938. No one dared go further, however. The work did not receive official approval and went for naught. No one so much as mentioned strategic defense.

The war came even closer, and the stagnation of military thought went on:

Our campaign tactics were shut up in their own framework to a certain extent, and the strategic aspects of war remained, unfor-



tunately, uninvestigated in our military theory. Needed interest in the early phases of war was not stimulated, and the necessary theoretical conclusions applicable to our western theater of military operations were not made. This was certainly a gap in our military theory, and, of course, it showed at the beginning of the war in 1941.

That was not all. There was even an attempt to retreat from the positions we had gained. In the period of the purges Voroshilov, bathed in a sweat of fear, called the theory of "deep operations" the "theory of treason." For several years it was banned, which was understandable. Practically all of the authors of original works and texts had been repressed, and their books were withdrawn from circulation. The fists of the deep operation, the mechanized corps, were disbanded after the Polish campaign and the failure in Spain. At the same time the development of bombardment aviation was curtailed. Mechanized corps were reestablished in December 1940.

Uncertainty and fear for one's life became part of the Army environment. Nonetheless, the enemy was still scorned:

Even the events in Poland in 1939 and in France in 1940 did not change the dominant official views, did not shake them. However, in the recesses of their minds the higher-ranking officers of the General Staff understood that the circumstances of the early period of a war might turn out completely differently. In several circles of the General Staff and the AGSh, men spoke rather concretely with the relevant calculations in hand. However, these conversations were conducted behind closed doors only and did not go beyond their offices.

It was with this theoretical baggage and in this temper that the Red Army went to war. If we are to be precise, this was no longer the Red Army but its successor, as yet not renamed. The RKKA ceased to exist in 1938 when its higher command staff was almost entirely wiped out along with more than half of its mid-level commanders.

Let us go back a few years. In spite of all the obstacles and difficulties, both real and invented by the Stalinist leadership, the RKKA of the mid 1930s, was a magnificent, first-class army, the best in the history of the country. It was the best army in Europe at the time, certainly the most intelligent. It was rich in talented people, having

searched out and absorbed what was best among the people.

It was an army created by the Revolution. The politicians used the Army frequently, but still the RKKA more than any other state institution embodied the revolutionary spirit: liberation from the fetters of centuries of slavery, and from the shackles of backwardness and ignorance, striving for limitless improvement, and irrepressible optimism. As Liddell Hart said about the army of the French Revolution, this spirit "made pedantic regimentation impossible, and gave scope to the development of the talents and initiative of individuals."<sup>15</sup>

A new generation of military intellectuals grew up in the Army. They took on extremely difficult tasks and accomplished many of them brilliantly. From top to bottom it was an army willing to learn. Commanders of a new sort educated a new type of soldier, unknown to the imperial army. They succeeded extraordinarily well. They taught barely literate country boys not only the wisdom of cannon fodder but the skills of culture. They prepared them for life. It is unlikely that there was anywhere else an atmosphere more full of the reforms and hopes aroused by the Revolution.

The simple soldiery and gentlemen officers of the tsarist army were gone. In their place were comrades-in-arms—Red Armymen and commanders. Regimentation was replaced by study, brass polishing by combat training. The lower ranks did not stand to attention for the higher. There were no ranks until 1935, only responsibilities. Regular forms of address entailed only respect for human dignity. Acknowledgement of an order was a simple "yes." Having shot the RKKA, they instituted the servile form "I obey," "just exactly," and "in no way, no." They were ashamed to return to such barracks gems as "glad to try" and "extremely grateful," but the effect was the same.

Even the external appearance of the men of all ranks in the RKKA had something noble and severely romantic about it. The uniform was simple and exactly the same for everyone. To eradicate this hated spirit, the old uniform was done away with and the field uniform of the tsarist army was reintroduced. The epaulets alone provoked complex memories and emotions. At the same time the militia were decked out like tsarist policemen. What Stalin was thinking at the time is hard to say. Maybe he hoped that men dressed in greatcoats like that would feel less of a desire to think. Maybe he wanted to wipe out even the external reminders of the Revolution, an epoch that in his opinion had passed. It cannot be excluded that he wished to attract the sympathy of that part

of the population who would prefer a simply Russian army to a revolutionary army.

God knows what it was, but a goal was reached. The image of the warrior—the soldier in his khakis and the officer in better cloth—drooped and paled. The senior officers and generals got the old-regime look they wanted. The former soldier's tunic did not suit most of them. The baggy jackets still hid the belly a little, that important organ that protruded a bit on most of the Soviet leadership of the time. Little operetta details, stripes and red linings for the generals, fur caps for the colonels, and other tinsel, could not make it right.

The best of times for the Red Army were hateful to Stalin. He was not an enemy of the Army in general. To the contrary. From the time of the Civil War he always dressed in a uniform of sorts, with boots. In 1929 he appointed himself the Great Leader of the Revolution. No, Stalin, who probably could not fieldstrip a rifle, loved to direct operations and command all the armed forces.

But the failed seminarian, having become the leading light of all other affairs, still could not impress the RKKA, where the revolutionary spirit that had already died in the Party and other bureaucracies was still strong. (The manual of garrison duty still read that all orders, except clearly counterrevolutionary orders, must be obeyed.) He especially disliked the higher command, which was composed mostly of young, intelligent men with independent ideas that he simply could not understand. It was not entirely without purpose that he killed them all, even those who danced to his tune.

After 1938 it was easier. Stalin appointed tamer men, who were without particular ideas and who, most important, were mute. But still for a long time they pursued and repressed everything that might remind them of the past. It did not end with changing uniforms. In 1941–42 many large units were written off the books as if they had perished in battle, or they were disbanded. In 1942, along with the reintroduction of shoulder straps, the idea of an officer corps was revived and officers were sharply separated from the soldiers. At the same time the institution of commissars was abolished. It had happened several times before, but this was the last. In 1944 they renamed the whole Army.

Along with the cadre, they destroyed what was best in the Red Army—the spirit, traditions, military culture. In the young, powerful organism of the RKKA even many of the shortcomings were continua-

tions of strengths. With maturity these phenomena would have had to fade away; the dogmatism of conclusions and the excessively offensive temper would have to go. This was an army strong enough to face any enemy. It is impossible to imagine that the RKKA would have surrendered half the country to Hitler.



## The Seventeenth Congress: The Victors Dig Their Own Grave

Piously sure of the truth of classes / and not knowing other truths, / they themselves gave meat to smell / to the beasts that later ripped them.

—Korzhavin

When the Congress convened on January 26, 1934, the country was experiencing famine, but the bureaucrats' morale was high. Stalin showered the delegates with data, mostly expressed in percentages, which were meant to prove the unprovable—that everything was all right.

The word famine was, of course, unsuitable and was not used. Instead, difficulties that had been successfully overcome were mentioned. Grain supplies, for example, were sufficient. Table 16.1 gives the figures presented by the general secretary on the gross yield of grain in millions of metric centners (100 kg).<sup>1</sup>

According to Stalin's figures, there was a small decrease in the gross yield in the years of most active collectivization, 1931 and 1932. Compared with the figure for 1929, there was a decrease of 3 to 4 percent. The delegates must have scratched their heads. The loss was insignificant, but the famine was terrible. Even by the most conservative estimates, 5 million to 6 million peasants died of malnutrition in those years.

Where can we find a solution to this paradox? It might be suggested that certain officials improved the statistics just a trifle for the report. We are not able to test such an assertion, but we can run a different sort of check on the basis of official statistics.

Proclaiming collectivization, Stalin complained about the low marketability of products from individual peasant farms. The 1926 harvest almost equaled the last prewar harvest (95 percent), but marketable grain (in circulation outside the villages—in fact, given to the state) was only half the 1913 level. In 1927 and 1928 marketable grain reached only 37 percent of the 1913 level. Because of the draconian

Table 16.1 USSR Grain Yield, 1913–33\*

1913	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933
735	725	725 <sup>1</sup>	717	835	695	699	898

\*Gross yield, in millions of metric centners.

measures employed in collecting grain in 1929, this figure jumped to 58 percent, and at the height of collectivization in 1930 to 73 percent. Stalin was modestly silent about subsequent years, but it is not hard to guess that marketable grain did not decrease because it was easier to collect grain from state farms than it was from individual peasant farms.

Turning to natural indexes (table 16.2) we can see how much grain was collected by the state and how much remained in the villages. For reference, marketable grain in 1913 amounted to 208 million centners.

We see that the decrease was not so modest after all. It turns out that in the years of artificial harvest shortfalls there was 25 percent less grain in the villages. One might think that this shortfall was not so terrible, but we have not finished our calculations.

We must not forget that in the early 1930s two-thirds of the peasants became collective farmers (*kolkhozniki*).<sup>5</sup> The first commandment in the *kolkhoz* was well known: GIVE GRAIN TO THE STATE! And they gave—no less than 30 percent.<sup>6</sup> As recently as 1927 the farmers had given only 9.5 percent. They poured another 20 percent at least into the state seed fund,<sup>7</sup> 15 to 20 percent was taken for the *kolkhoz* seed fund and for feed for the *kolkhoz*'s cattle; at least another 10 percent was lost in harvesting, threshing, and storing—which the backward yeoman farmer would understandably not have permitted. Taken altogether, it appears that the peasant had only one-half or one-third of the grain for himself that he had had in 1927–28.<sup>8</sup>

A half or two-thirds less bread might not be so hard on us, just a little belt-tightening. But bread was the staple of the Russian peasants' diet, and losing one half to two-thirds of it meant famine. He had never had enough meat for most of the year, only in the fall after the annual butchering. Now there was no meat or milk to speak of. The peasants had butchered as much of their livestock as they were able on the way to the *kolkhoz*, and the *kolkhoz*'s animals were not for him. In 1933 there remained these percentages of the levels of 1929: cattle, 56.6

Table 16.2 Disposition of Grain, 1927-32\*

1927	1928	Collected by the State		1931	1932
		1929	1930		
77	77	119	152	183 <sup>3</sup>	205-210 <sup>3</sup>
Remaining in the villages					
658	648	598	683	512	494
Percentage					
100	98.5	91	108	77.5 <sup>4</sup>	75 <sup>4</sup>

\*In millions of metric centners.

percent; sheep and goats, 34.5 percent; pigs, 58.1 percent; horses, 48.7 percent.

And how was it for the inhabitants of the nonblack-soil regions where even in good years there was not enough grain to last from one harvest to the next? Now, after collectivization, they could not buy supplementary grain on the free market because no grain was available. The peasants, like the workers and office workers, were not given rationing cards. They died of starvation, whole villages and *volosts*.<sup>9</sup> But the same horrors occurred in the fertile Ukraine.

The state received three times more grain for its own use, so collectivization seemed successful from its point of view. What did the state do with all the excess grain accumulated by doling out only limited amounts through rationing to the urban population? Surely Stalin and his courageous comrades-in-arms could not devour millions of centners of bread (and meat and butter)? They did not starve, of course. But most of the grain was exported to pay the huge expenses of industrialization.<sup>10</sup>

Stalin did not think of anything new. He followed Trotskyist recipes. One of their authors, Preobrazhensky, devised the theory of "primary socialist accumulation." According to the theory, the building of socialism in its first stage should be accomplished mainly by the maximum appropriation by the state of the surplus product produced in the "un-socialist sphere" by peasants, craftsmen, NEPMen. It sounded excessively candid, and the theory was criticized as destructive of the alliance with the peasantry. That did not stop Stalin from carrying it out with a zeal found in neither Preobrazhensky or Trotsky.

Molotov announced at the 1933 Congress that during the Five-Year Plan 1.5 billion rubles in gold were spent abroad to purchase industrial equipment. This is a huge figure. It is enough to glance at a list of the largest projects to see where the money went. Each project was equipped with foreign machinery, built according to plans made by foreign firms and in consultation with foreign specialists. Only the slave labor was native and cheap: prisoners, kulaks, and starving peasants from all over Russia who were willing to work for food alone.<sup>11</sup> In the five years of the plan the following enterprises were put into operation: in ferrous metals industries—Magnitka, Kuznetsk, Zaporozhstal, and the first part of Nizhny Tagil; several plants were also constructed—tractor factories in Kharkov, Stalingrad, and Cheliabinsk; automobile plants in Moscow and Nizhny Novgorod; Dneproges and Bereznikov chemical *combinat*. In addition, several enterprises in other fields were reconstructed, again using imported tools and machines.

Thus, much of the foundation for heavy industrialization was laid in the first Five-Year Plan. The people ought to have been told, however, at what cost this was achieved. It was not only the price of labor and sweat. The industrial cathedrals cost the lives of millions of Russians. To the 5 million who died of famine must be added another 10 million liquidated as a class.

The capital accumulated at the cost of human lives sank into the bottomless maw of the Five-Year Plan, and a good amount simply evaporated into thin air. There were many reasons: the unrestrained, grandiose fantasies of Kuibyshev, who crushed vsnkh and Gosplan, removing every specialist who might know a little something, so he could insert ridiculous figures into the plan; the absence of qualified workers because the old engineers were purged on the eve of construction in 1928–30; theft and slovenliness; the pomposity of the political overseers.

The first Five-Year Plan was catastrophically unfulfilled in metals production and coal mining. The story of the ferrous metals industry is especially instructive. In 1928 Kuibyshev's vsnkh submitted its own version of the Five-Year Plan—the so-called optimal or maximal plan—which exceeded Gosplan's goals by 150 to 200 percent. The Gosplan experts laughed and tried to explain that the tempo could not be sustained, that the figures were unrealistic: "The vsnkh's figures are beyond the bounds of the possible in this Five-Year Plan" (Professor Bogolepov). "I expect that Gosplan would evaluate the vsnkh Five-



Year Plan as possible in eight, if not ten, years" (Professor Kalinnikov).

Not likely! Comrade Kuibyshev did not graduate from universities; he had dropped out of high school; in everything he was guided by class consciousness. The muddleheaded wrecker-professors were cleared out—imprisoned or exiled.<sup>12</sup> Kuibyshev exulted. At the Sixteenth Congress, just warming to the battle, he said:

do you remember when VSNKh proposed a figure of ten million tons of cast iron, when the alternatives were six, then seven, then eight million tons in Gosplan's original plan. At that time the smelting of ten million tons of iron seemed impossible. . . . Bourgeois economists who scoffed at us and called our plans fantasies had in mind first of all that figure—ten million tons of iron. Now that "fantasy" has been increased by seven million tons, and the increased plan of seventeen million tons will provoke even greater fury in the capitalistic world. When we fulfill that program, comrades, we will become the leading producer of iron in Europe (applause).<sup>13</sup>

It did not do Kuibyshev any good to fill everyone's ears with tales of 10 million to 17 million tons. The bourgeois economists had a right to laugh. The "fury of the capitalist world" was a figment; so was the metal.

A new Congress met in 1934. For some reason no one gave a specific report on the results of the first Five-Year Plan outlining how much of anything was projected and how much achieved. Stalin and all the others used only excerpted facts, only the most positive, and never side by side with the plan's targets. Instead there were two reports on the second Five-Year Plan by Molotov and Kuibyshev. The chairman of the Council of People's Commissars noted that in 1932 6.2 million tons of iron were produced. The favorite device of percentage gains was missing, but it is not hard to figure. If we take the minimal estimate of 10 million tons, the plan was 62 percent fulfilled. Recall that the experts had suggested 6 million, 7 million, then 8 million tons. In that case the percentage would have been lovely. But if we take Kuibyshev's last, triumphal cry, then the results are sad indeed, only 36.5 percent.

Ordzhonikidze let slip in a swaggering sort of speech how some of the newest, largest plants of the time managed to produce so little metal:

I remember that an engineer of the MacKee firm implored me not to put the blast furnace into operation that winter: "If there are no political considerations, please do not use it," said engineer Haven in 1931, "because it will collapse." He proved to be a prophet as far as the first blast furnace was concerned. We killed it. But we destroyed it because we mishandled it, while our young engineers operated the fourth blast furnace when it was 35 degrees below, and it works fine.<sup>14</sup>

They destroyed one, and the other worked fine. So said the director of all heavy industry. That is, the success rate was 50 percent.

Ordzhonikidze forgot to say that the foolish destruction of equipment was not the only problem. The Chairman of the TSKK added a little something. On July 1, 1933, said Rudzutak, almost 220 million rubles worth of equipment, almost entirely foreign, was found idle in metallurgical plants.<sup>15</sup> To evaluate just how large a loss this was, we have to know that in the previous three-and-a-half years 1 billion rubles worth of machines were imported for all heavy industry.

So what did Kuibyshev do? Was he embarrassed, did he acknowledge his error, set the professors free with an apology? Nothing of the sort. Without saying a word about his monstrous error, he projected a goal of 18 million tons of iron for the end of the second Five-Year Plan in 1937.

Apparently there were serious disagreements among those compiling the second Five-Year Plan. Ordzhonikidze opined that the tempo was just right, Leninist, Stalinist and "let's not overdo it." He recommended decreasing the plan's goals by 10 percent for the whole economy and by 6 percent for heavy industry. He did not forget iron: why say 18 million, he asked, 16 million would be fine. At this point Voroshilov, Vareikis, and Kirov shouted, "Right!" and Molotov expressed agreement. They did not want to have to cope with Kuibyshev's fantasy for another five years.

Things were bad with coal also. At first a goal of 75 million tons was set, but then in connection with the change of plans in metals that figure was raised to 125 million. Already in 1930 knowledgeable people were warning that coal was being taken at an accelerated pace only from existing mines. No new mines were being opened up, and the apparent rise in production could not be maintained. In the last year of the Five-Year Plan 64.2 million tons was mined, that is 85.6 percent

and 51.5 percent of the original and final goals, respectively.

Failures in the metallurgical and mining industries were not exceptions. They stand out clearly because in these industries the production of all enterprises is the same—iron, steel, rolled metals, coal—and because it is all measured in tons. It is hard to play with the figures.

Machine-building is a more fruitful field for paper successes: the results of production are displayed in rubles. Thanks to that, everything came out the way Stalin and Kuibyshev wanted. In his unfortunate speech at the previous congress Kuibyshev had said that 17 million tons of iron would determine everything else, especially machine-building. But marvelous are Your works, Lord! You did not give Kuibyshev all the metal he asked for, only one-third of it, and still the growth in machine-building was as expected, to the furious envy of the capitalist world. Production of ferrous metals doubled, but production of machines increased thirteen times! In 1928, 703 million rubles worth of machinery was produced;<sup>16</sup> in 1932, 9,300 million rubles worth.<sup>17</sup> It was a miracle wrought by a Bolshevik. One might also think that there had been huge metal reserves hidden away somewhere. But that was not the case. Before the Five-Year Plan the country had experienced a severe metals shortage.

The explanation is simple. Industrialization was accompanied by increasing specialization of separate factories, and this led to an increase of double counting. Prices on metals and machines increased extraordinarily (which Voroshilov vaguely referred to), and of course figures were also exaggerated. All of this produced extra machines on paper, but not in reality since the necessary steel and iron for them did not exist.

Not everything was quite so sad. The one aspect of the Five-Year Plan for which the figures were wholly accurate was capital investment. When it came to wasting the people's money, everyone strove to do it more and faster, caring little for the utility of what was bought. Investments for the whole Five-Year Plan were said to be 13 billion rubles, but already in the first three years they had managed to spend 11 billion instead of the planned 6.86. Where the rest came from it is better not to ask.<sup>18</sup>

The reader must not think that the whole plan was a sham. A number of huge factories were actually put into operation, most of which we have already mentioned. The Soviet Union began to produce some of its own machines, including tractors, combines, trucks, tanks, planes. It is impossible to dispute the vital necessity of industrialization. But we must question the need for such an hysterical race, in which



elementary technical and economic rules were consciously violated and that led, naturally, to huge losses. Why were things not run by the specialists instead of the untrained politicians? Why was it so unplanned (Kuibyshev's fantasies cannot be considered planning)? Why, finally, did we have to pay such an enormous price in human life, dooming millions of people to death or suffering?

All the fuss about tempos could only fool fools. Low starting points easily produce high percentage growth figures. If you add one new factory to the only other one in operation, you get growth of 100 percent. But still it is only one factory in a huge country. Even Stalin understood that.

The Bolsheviks preferred to forget that Russia had undergone very rapid economic growth beginning in the 1890s and continuing into the First World War. Economic dislocation increased rapidly in 1918. The major cause was not the Civil War, as is commonly thought. Neither the Reds nor the Whites bombed industrial enterprises in that war. The destruction was caused by the nationalization of industry, recklessly carried out by the Bolsheviks. Almost immediately the new masters were incapable of running the economy. There followed a decade of stagnation and regression, hypocritically called a period of "reconstruction." Had it not been for nationalization and other wonders, the plants and factories—like almost everywhere else in the world—would have gone on making a profit and accumulating capital. It would not have been necessary to rob and destroy the peasantry. Great leaps would not have been needed. To put it mildly, we stood around for ten years and then hurried to make up for it in just five years, which urgently became four years. If we compare the real tempo of the Five-Year Plan to the whole period from 1921 to 1932, it immediately becomes clear: Russia would probably have industrialized faster in normal economic conditions. Everything was done, however, to make conditions as abnormal as possible, and in the end there was not much to brag about. The Bolsheviks only partially filled the vacuum they had created.

We have bored the reader with statistics (and grown weary of them ourselves), but an economic picture drawn only with words looks pale and incomplete. Probably many of the participants at the Congress saw through the statistical lies of Stalin and Kuibyshev. Maybe they felt an icy draft from the millions of graves. Maybe they seethed with anger and indignation. Stalin, the instigator, organizer, and inspirer of the whole bloody deception, understood best of all the critical nature of his



position. But just let them try to get to the bottom of it and there would be less than the proverbial damp spot left, not an ink spot. Everything hinged on the long-suffering people. Also on the ignorance, disorganization, sluggishness, indecisiveness, and cowardice of the Party masses. And of course Stalin's personal dexterity, purposefulness, and unscrupulousness were central.

As we see it, Stalin's plan was to avoid discussion of recent events at the Congress and to use the forum to deafen the delegates and their constituents with false propaganda, the noise of self-glorification, and theatrical effects. Later he would get around to breaking heads, which was more practical than trying to shut mouths or tie hands. The signal to begin mass terror within the Party was the murder of Kirov and that signal was given the year of the Congress.

It is said, and it can be believed although not with complete certainty, that many delegates were considering trying to remove Stalin from his post as leader of the Party. The tactic they adopted for the purpose would not be to criticize Stalin or, God forbid, to expose him in speeches at the Congress so that the Party might still appear monolithic abroad and at home. Rather, in elections to the TSK they would cast more votes against the Great Leader. Although Stalin would be reelected (they did not expect to be able to exclude him), it would be awkward for him to remain General Secretary. They expected that Kirov would take that position.

Nothing came of the efforts. Stalin kept his wits about him, had the protocols of the balloting commission (whose chairman was V. P. Zatonsky) changed, and later cruelly avenged himself on the delegates to the Congress. Almost 80 percent of them perished in the purges.

If these rumors are true, the conspirators fell to their own cowardly and fallacious tactic. It was much easier for Stalin to falsify the balloting because during the twenty-six meetings of the Congress not one critical comment, not a hint of one, was directed at him. In those circumstances even a single vote against his election to the TSK would have seemed out of place. Instead, there was inordinate praise in every speech and enthusiastic applause throughout the entire hall.

The tactic of silence was the greatest hypocrisy. It was treason. The people were tormented, starving, crushed. They craved a champion to speak aloud of their suffering, to provide words of comfort and hope; but they did not get them.

Stalin, on the other hand, was already looking far ahead. He suc-

ceeded in presenting the main figures of the coming repression in a properly unfavorable light at the Congress. By various machinations he managed to get his erstwhile critics and rivals to praise him from the rostrum, to breathlessly glorify Stalinist deeds and to praise Stalin himself as the "field marshal of proletarian forces" (Bukharin's phrase). At the same time they made a show of their own mistakes, blindness, stupidity, and insincerity. Their admission sounded much more convincing than the sycophantic speeches of Stalin's accomplices.

Having played their appointed roles, the former oppositionists immediately became the first objects of the terror. They truly brought it on themselves. In 1934 they still wrote their own speeches without the assistance of the NKVD, and they confessed to everything. They recognized the historical righteousness and wisdom of comrade Stalin; they confessed to the viciousness of their own policies, which would lead to the restoration of capitalism and to strengthening the kulak (Bukharin); they confessed to a passive link with determined counterrevolutionaries (Kamenev, Zinoviev, Tomsky). How can we be surprised that they would move from such nasty things to open conflict with proletarian authority, to planning the murders of Party leaders, to communicating with fascist intelligence. "A monstrous, but natural development," wrote one publicist. Only the grave cures hunchbacks. An argument like that was sufficiently convincing for the average man, Party member or not. It did not pretend to be more. Neither did Stalin.

These public confessions destroyed the victims', shall we say, moral right to oppose their accusers to the end. Many of them were dragged out in public trials. It is interesting that the other victims, who had not been previously put through the public penitence, were harder to break. They were usually killed secretly.

Seven members of former oppositions repudiated their past from the rostrum at the Congress: Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Lominadze, Preobrazhensky, Rykov, and Tomsky.<sup>19</sup> The positions of these reformed heretics were various. The three from the right opposition remained in the TSK and held more or less responsible posts: Bukharin was editor of *Izvestiia*, Rykov was Peoples' Commissar of Communications, and Tomsky was a member of the VSNKh Presidium. Lomindaze had been ejected from the TSK in 1930 and sent to Magnitogorsk to atone for his sins.

Zinoviev and Kamenev had been expelled from the Party in 1927, but they were soon restored and given work. Kamenev was made head

of the Scientific-Technical Department in VSNKh and in 1929 became chairman of the Main Concessions Committee. Zinoviev became a member of the Presidium of Tsentrsoiuz.<sup>20</sup> In 1932 they were expelled again and sent to Siberia because when they had become acquainted with Riutin's platform through Sten, they had not informed the TSK. In 1933 they suddenly showed up in Moscow and after talks with Stalin and Kaganovich were reinstated in the Party. The main condition was their confession at the Congress. Preobrazhensky's situation was similar. He had been expelled in 1927, admitted his error in 1929, was expelled two years later and readmitted in 1933.

The oppositionists' speeches were chock-full of hypocrisy and self-abasement. They all immoderately exalted Stalin. Bukharin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev were at their most repulsive.

Bukharin led the procession of penitents. He began by describing his complete political bankruptcy:

the rights, to whom I belonged, had a different *political* line, a line against full-time socialist offensive, against a new attack on capitalist elements . . . it was in fact against the forced development of *industrialization* . . . against the extraordinary and bitter struggle with the *kulaks*, a struggle that was later exemplified by the slogan, "liquidation of the kulaks as a class". . . .

It is clear that *precisely because* of this, that group inevitably became the center of gravity for all forces that fought against the socialist offensive. . . .<sup>21</sup>

We, Bukharin said, fought with the Party regime, with

comrade Stalin as the supreme spokesman and inspirer of the Party line, Stalin who won the inner-Party struggle on the *profoundly principled basis of Leninist policy*, and specifically on that basis received the warm support of the overwhelming, the utterly overwhelming mass of the Party and the working class. . . .

The decisive destruction of that [Bukharinist, rightist] opposition, just like the destruction of the Trotskyite and so-called Leningrad opposition, was a *necessary precondition* to the successful and victorious development of the socialist offensive.

Therefore

the duty of every member of the Party is to struggle with all anti-Party groups, actively and mercilessly struggle, regardless of whatever personal ties and relations there may be, to rally around the tsK, to rally around comrade Stalin as the personal embodiment of the mind and will of the Party, its leader, its theoretical and practical great leader.

Along the way Bukharin lashed out at all of the most recent groups that "ever faster and more consistently have slipped into counterrevolution," and disowned "my former pupils, who have received their just punishment." He had in mind first of all Slepko, who was imprisoned with Riutin.

Having finished with his errors, self-flagellation, and treachery, Bukharin reminded his listeners that he was a prominent theoretician and was still an active member of the Academy of Sciences. With figures and citations in hand he spoke of the remarkable successes of the Soviet economy, especially of agriculture.

In the recent past Bukharin had also been an international figure, as leader of the Comintern. This had brought him into contact with the foreign policy of Stalin's government, which he owned to be magnificent. There followed a long denunciation with extensive excerpts from foreign sources of Hitler; of Spengler, the ideologue of fascism; of its poet Yost; and also of the Japanese militarists. Bukharin concluded:

We are the only country that embodies the progressive forces of history. Our Party and comrade Stalin personally are powerful heralds not only of *economic*, but also of *technical* and *scientific* progress on our planet. We are going to battle for the fate of *mankind*. For that we need unity, unity, and more unity.

Down with all disorganizers.

Long live our Party, that great fighting fraternity, a fraternity of tempered warriors as hard as steel, of brave revolutionaries, who will win all victories under the leadership of the glorious field marshal of the proletarian forces, the best of the best—comrade Stalin (applause).

Zinoviev and Kamenev, the Dobchinsky and Bobchinsky<sup>22</sup> of the Bolshevik Revolution, were for some reason let loose during the discussion of the reports on the Five-Year Plan, although they did not mention that topic at all.



Zinoviev did not follow Bukharin's example. He did not even bother to pretend to make a report, but spoke only of his errors:

I must, it would seem, and it's my own fault, entirely my fault, speak only of errors and illustrate them by my own example, to present myself as living illustration of those deviations, those infidelities, those errors and scandalous diversions from Leninism, in battle with which the Party has achieved those successes to which the whole world attentively turns a watchful eye.

No one can say that I committed any one specific political error. That is half the trouble. I committed a chain of errors, a chain in which one link was unavoidably attached to another. I had the temerity to impose on the Party my own personal understanding of Leninism, my own particular understanding of "the philosophy of an epoch."<sup>23</sup>

He went on in the same vein, in the same long phrases, as if he were translating from bad German.

Appropriately and inappropriately, Zinoviev fervently and repeatedly bowed deeply to Stalin:

Vladimir Ilich said of Engels that he belonged to the number of rare, extremely rare writers and thinkers, whose works you can reread many times, every time finding some new wealth of content. Comrade Stalin's work undoubtedly belongs to this class of works. All of you have done this long ago, done what I have only recently come to. I read and reread his fundamental works, which are the quintessence of Leninism in this epoch, which are the algebra of communist work in the course of all history. . . . Comrade Stalin's report, which entered the treasury of world communism at the moment it was delivered here . . . deserves to be called the second program of the Party.

Stalin, like an attentive mother, always tried to keep Zinoviev from misbehavior:

after I was readmitted to the Party the first time. I once heard from the mouth of comrade Stalin the following comment. He told me: "You have been hurt and are being hurt in the eyes of the Party not so much by fundamental errors, as by your deviousness in relation to the Party over many years." (Many cries of "Right, properly

said!')) Absolutely right, comrades! That is how it was. And I hope that I have now thoroughly understood that comment.

Zinoviev confessed with gusto the sin of his failure to denounce:

When Sten showed me the double-dyed, kulak, counterrevolutionary, rightist platform, instead of fulfilling the most elementary obligation of a member of the Bolshevik Party, instead of doing that, instead of demanding that Sten himself immediately inform the Central Committee of our Party of all that he knew, instead of that I kept Sten's secret, which in fact turned out to be the conspiracy of Riutin and company, of the whole group, which is not worth mentioning from this rostrum.

Comrades, it would seem, I was punished by the Party a second time and entirely deservedly. And, comrades, I must speak of this entirely candidly, as I will speak always and everywhere, that this was my most serious mistake up till now.

Long-winded and inspired, the orator heaped filth on Trotsky. Nor did he spare himself. Again and again he praised Stalin. At the end he fell to his knees:

I have entirely and finally understood that if it were not for that leadership, for those iron cadres, which have led the Party into battle against all oppositions, then the Party, the country, the working class, Lenin's plans and the Revolution itself would be threatened by greater dangers than they are. That leadership, which is revered by the people of our country and the working class, by all of the best people of our country and the working class of the whole world, saved us from that danger (applause).

(In his sycophantic zeal Zinoviev did not notice that he insulted the working class by excluding it from the ranks of the "best people of our country." Neither, incidentally, did his listeners.)

Kamenev, as in past years, followed Zinoviev's line: "I have the sad duty at this congress of victors to present a chronicle of defeats, a demonstration of that chain of efforts, delusions and crimes to which every group and every individual is doomed who separates himself from the great teachings of Marx-Engels, of Lenin-Stalin, from the collective life of the party, from the directives of its leading institutions."<sup>24</sup>

On the Riutin group: "the ideology of the Riutinists is as sawed-off

as the shotguns the kulaks fired at the Communists carrying out collectivization. . . . Different, more material weapons of influence were needed here, and they were applied to the very members of that group, and to their accomplices and protectors, and entirely properly and justly they were applied to me.”<sup>25</sup>

Kamenev recalled an episode of 1928 when Bukharin, that man of principle, having just worked so hard to expel the Trotskyite-Zinovievite opposition from the Party, appealed to him, defeated and powerless as he was, to form a bloc against Stalin. Kamenev, by the way, wasted no time informing the Central Committee and was quickly reinstated in the Party. Remembering that, he enjoyed covering the rightists with mud.

Kamenev did not spare repentance either, understanding that he would not be able to overdo it. He said, “Comrades, I have expressed my deep regret for the mistakes I have made (*Voice*: ‘You must not only express yourself, but justify yourself in the matter!’) I want to say from this rostrum that I consider the Kamenev, who from 1925 to 1933 fought with the Party and its leadership, a political corpse, and that I wish to go forward dragging behind myself in the biblical (excuse me) expression that old skin (laughter).” Toward the end came the obligatory hallelujah: “Long live our socialist country! Long live our, *our* great leader and commander comrade Stalin! (applause).”

The Congress listened attentively to the speeches of Bukharin, Kamenev, and Zinoviev (only Kamenev was cued once and reminded of the time limit). They left the rostrum to applause. It would seem that sentimental memories, remnants of their former fame, still clung to their names. It must be admitted that they spoke well and skillfully. But the content of the speeches was repugnant: the collapse of personality, denial of convictions, the ability to admit to errors that they had not made, the attempt to worm their way into the audience’s good graces, to assume the tone of the collective psychosis, their desire to ignore facts were all thoroughly hypocritical and false.

Rykov and Tomsky were received differently. At the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Congresses Aleksei Ivanovich Rykov was met with prolonged applause and seen off with a thunderous ovation and the singing of the Party’s anthem. Now the audience was cold and unfriendly. Twice he was interrupted to be reminded of regulations. Listeners yelled out rudely.

By that member of the Party leadership [he said], who spoke out to defend that thesis of building socialism in one country. . . .

[Voice: That was comrade Stalin!] I meant to describe the role of comrade Stalin in the period immediately after Vladimir Ilich's death. [Voice from the hall: We know without your telling us!]

The comrades did not accept his repentance. Peters, the well-known Chekist, called out, "He has talked for an hour without saying anything!" Rykov did not wait for applause.

Neither was there applause for Tomsy, a recognized buffoon who has lost the wit he once had. He was received with extreme hostility. Peters twice demanded that he tell about Eismont and Smirnov, and Acting Chairman Postyshev cut Tomsy short, although he had not been speaking long: "Comrade Tomsy, it is time to finish." Obviously upset, Tomsy hastened to put distance between himself and his arrested friend: "The Party correctly judged my error, my closeness to Smirnov, which gave the counterrevolutionary Eismont-Smirnov group the opportunity and the basis to take refuge behind my name." Then he despondently descended from the rostrum.

Kirov spoke after Tomsy and offered a conclusion to the speeches of the rightists; he sneeringly compared the three former Politburo members to transport drivers.

What is there left to do to all these people, who until today were on the train? (Applause, laughter.)

It would seem, comrades, that they were trying to push their way into the general celebration, to get back into step with our music, to join in our enthusiasm. But no matter how they try, it doesn't come off. (Applause, laughter.)

Take Bukharin, for example. In my opinion he sang as if from music, but his voice just wasn't the same. (Laughter, applause.) To say nothing of comrade Rykov and comrade Tomsy. . . .<sup>26</sup>

Kirov said there was no place for the penitents in the higher leadership: "And it seems to me, I do not wish to be a prophet, but it will be some time before this host of transport drivers joins our communist army (applause)."

Under the circumstances there was no need to prophesy. All had been already decided. The Rights were not returned to the general staff. Quite the opposite, they were demoted. At the Congress they were elected not members but candidate members of the TSK.

Kirov still could not foresee his fate. Only ten months later he would



be murdered on Stalin's orders. But now he was trying as hard as he could to please the great leader. His speech was specially titled "The Report of Comrade Stalin—The Program of All Our Work." Kirov suggested that instead of approving, as usual, a detailed resolution on the political report of the rsk, the Congress approve Stalin's report in toto and accept its proposals to be carried out as Party law. In a joyous outburst the delegates jumped to their feet. Stalin came out on the platform only to decline, from modesty, a final word and to give the signal for a tremendous ovation, which turned into the singing of the "Internationale," at the end of which the ovation broke out with renewed vigor. When this collective demonstration quieted, Khrushchev formally repeated Kirov's suggestion on behalf of the Moscow, Lenin-grad, and Ukrainian delegations. It was approved enthusiastically and became a customary part of all later congresses.

Let us return briefly to the former oppositionists. The Congress listened politely to the insignificant Lominadze. He left to applause. They were harder on Preobrazhensky. He made a pitiful impression. Of the former polemicist and theoretician there remained only ruins. Although his theory of pitiless exploitation of the peasantry ("primary socialist accumulation") had become the foundation stone of official economic policy, it was impermissible to speak of it. All that remained for him was to cry into his vest, which had already gone out of Party style. Preobrazhensky tearfully repented. He smeared his Trotskyite past, Trotsky himself, and his past mistakes with the blackest paint. He concluded with a deliberately stupid passage calculated to arouse indulgence and a favorable response:

at the present time, more than ever I feel, more than ever I recognize the truth of the worker who advised me: if you don't thoroughly understand something, go with the Party, vote with Ilich. So much more, comrades, now when I am reexamining everything, when I have sufficiently recognized all my mistakes, I repeat these words of the worker to myself in a different stage of the Revolution and say: vote with comrade Stalin, you won't be mistaken.<sup>27</sup>

The hall was silent. The trick did not work. Not long after, Kabakov, possibly with prompting, rebuked him from the rostrum:

fundamentally wrong and inappropriate was the statement by Preobrazhensky, when he said that he had to act as had the worker

who apparently voted blindly for comrade Lenin's theses. It is untrue that the program put forth by Lenin and Stalin was ever accepted by workers who voted for those theses blindly. The workers voted for the theses of Lenin-Stalin then, as they do now, enthusiastically and with conviction. They accept enthusiastically the program presented at the Seventeenth Congress by comrade Stalin because it expresses the proletarian program, the hopes and aspirations of the working class of the whole world. When a man who pretends to have achieved a certain theoretical level comes out on this rostrum and says that he has to vote for these theses blindly, then let us say plainly that this expresses entirely and thoroughly the spinelessness of a rotten intellectual.<sup>28</sup>

The speeches of Stalin's broken opponents were but drops in the swollen stream. The overwhelming majority of the remaining orators delivered speeches cut from a single pattern. Each began with a description of the unbearable pride he experienced looking at the mighty successes and victories gained under the wise leadership. Then, coming back to earth, each spoke of particular problems, some of which appeared to be unprecedented disorders. This was especially true of speeches dealing with railroads and industry. Very sensitive agrarian themes were treated more gingerly. Interestingly, this was the last Congress at which the negative sides of reality were dealt with so openly. In conclusion, the speakers invariably soared to rarefied heights of pure optimism and exclaimed wishes for health and long life.

There were comic interludes in the great spectacle. One was played by the respected revolutionary Gleb Krzhizhanovsky. Having clambered up onto the platform, he began by saying he had been a member of the party for forty-two years.<sup>29</sup> Then, shaking with tender emotion, he revealed other astonishing things. There was no need to be distressed, he told his comrades, that we had not yet outdistanced everyone else in the world. Bolsheviks possessed their own arithmetic and physics. "Every kilowatt of our station is twice as strong as its foreign counterpart." That was guaranteed by the authority of the Academy of Sciences. And that was little enough. In our socialist conditions every tractor has "six times the useful strength of tractors used by, say, farmers in the North American United States." Therefore the 160,000 tractors enumerated at the end of the second Five-Year Plan were equal to one million of theirs.<sup>30</sup>

Tukhachevsky's speech did not stand out at the Congress, but we examine it because it helps clarify some subtleties of the Army's relationship with Stalin. Most of the speech was routine. He spoke of the needs of the Red Army and of pretensions about industrialization. But it began:

The technical might of the Red Army grew in step with the construction of our industrial base. Comrade Voroshilov has reported on that with clarity and detail. . . .

I want to add to that, that in the development of our technical might comrade Stalin not only played a general guiding role but also took a direct and daily part in selecting the necessary types of weapons and in putting them into production. Comrade Stalin not only outlined the general tasks, especially concerning equipping the Army with an air force, tanks, and long-range and rapid-firing artillery of the most modern sort, but he met with the organizers of production and worked out the practical and successful plans of production. . . . This work, this leadership created that technical might, which the Red Army possesses and which you will see again on parade.<sup>31</sup>

Amazingly, Tukhachevsky gave Stalin credit not only for setting out the general tasks, but also for personally creating the technical might of the RKKA. It was as if none of the rest had happened: the 1927 report on the necessity to technically rearm the Army, which was twice rejected and ridiculed by Stalin, did not exist. Nor did the retirements of 1928, nor the squabbles, insults, and intrigues that invariably accompanied any discussion of military questions with the General Secretary.<sup>32</sup>

Of course Tukhachevsky did not burn with love for Stalin. He, too, was a master strategist and tactician. Tukhachevsky accomplished a deep encircling movement and licked the Great Leader in an undefended sector. It is also possible that he was following the popular aphorism, "Military discipline is the ability to show the chief that you are stupider than he." Not only Stalin believed that.

The Congress was long and luxurious. The delegates were well entertained and not only in Moscow's theaters. On January 31 there was a mass meeting on Red Square, after which there passed before the delegates and guests of the Congress "a procession of workers from the plants and factories and the employees of the regions of Moscow, in

which military units participated.” There was a parade of the troops of the Moscow garrison at noon on February 9, and in the evening there were elections to the TSK. It is hard to decide whether the military was marched past the delegates on the eve of the elections to calm, to encourage, or to frighten.

All worked out according to Stalin’s plan. One after another, people pretending to be masters of the country and the future masters of the world climbed onto the rostrum to proclaim boundless praise: Stalin did this . . . Stalin did that . . . Stalin indicated . . . Stalin taught . . . Long live Stalin.

They thought they were making history. Stalin declined to make concluding remarks and grinned in his mustache. For him they were already dead men. In his heart he had already buried them. He had reserved no place for them in the earthly utopia they were exalting.





# IV

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## Conspiracy Against the RKKA

Up to now we have spoken of Caligula as a princeps.

It remains to discuss him as a monster.

—Suetonius

There is a commandment to forgive our enemies,

but there is no commandment to forgive our friends.

—L. Medici

Some comrades think that repression is the main thing in the advance of socialism, and if repression does not increase, there is no advance. Is that so? Of course it is not so.

—Stalin



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Events after they have occurred become subjects of investigation. Historians want to know what caused Napoleon to lead the Grande Armée on its catastrophic march to Moscow. Defending their opinions they polemicize bitterly, suggest reasons, cite facts. Even if they, as is usually the case, do not find a single formula, still the general understanding of history is enriched with points of view and conceptions.

The destruction of the Red Army was, in its consequences for the nation, Stalin's most important act. To date it has been very little researched. In the preceding parts of this book we have tried to describe the path that led to this catastrophe. Now we will talk of the catastrophe itself.

Without access to the most important documents we will not be able to discuss the problems with the depth we would like. We will try to reestablish the course of events and suggest probable causes. That is all that can be done today.





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## 17 The Political Background: Coup d'État

They unleashed it themselves  
trying to lead, to master the country,  
and 1937 came  
not just misfortune but punishment.  
—Korzhavin

After the Seventeenth Congress, nothing apparently threatened Stalin's position at the pinnacle of power. Rivals and enemies had been politically and organizationally destroyed. They had admitted their defeat and lost their influence. The cult of the Great Leader flowered profusely. References to his utterances and toasts in his honor became an obligatory part of every public speech on any topic. Collectivization was accomplished. Stalin's five-year plans were being fulfilled at top speed. The international position of the country was sufficiently secure. The reorganization had made the Red Army one of the best in Europe.

There were difficulties, however. True, as Stalin had said, "Our problems are such that they *themselves contain the possibility for overcoming them . . . they give us the basis for overcoming them.*"<sup>1</sup> Still the problems remained. Since 1929 the country had experienced a severe supply crisis. In 1935 the system of rationing cards was ended; but some products, particularly meat, were still in very short supply. The predominance of heavy industry and the demise of the private entrepreneur had led to deficits of consumer goods. The quality of goods was extremely poor. Industry was constantly short of metals and other materials, not to mention machinery. Plans were chronically underfilled in ferrous metals, energy, and machine construction. Available capital did not cover the demands of huge capital-intensive projects. The government resorted to printing money, which caused inflation.

In 1934 the problems of power became especially acute. Stalin could understand that, although he had achieved supreme power, it was by no means guaranteed. The economic failures of the first Five-Year Plan, the dissatisfaction of the population, the opposition's attacks of

1930–33, the fluctuation of moods at the Seventeenth Congress, all revealed the vulnerability of Stalin's position. Power, achieved at the cost of enormous efforts with the help of painstaking intrigue and risky provocations, could easily be lost in a day. If a rebellious plenum or a disobedient congress should suddenly refuse to accept black as white and should remove Stalin from his post, he would immediately turn into a pitiful oppositionist, a former great leader, a toothless lion, a general without an army.

The fact that the opposition's efforts, however feeble, continued between the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Congresses, after the victory over his most powerful opponents, Bukharin's group, must have put Stalin on his guard. As long as thoughts were still stirring in Party minds, he could not sleep soundly. There was little comfort in the apparent fact that the centers of opposition were weak and their methods resembled partisan warfare. Stalin could and did see in these desperate hit-and-run attacks the germs of more general dissatisfaction, nuclei around which that dissatisfaction could be consolidated. Therefore his reprisals came quickly and sharply, without discussions and organizational maneuverings. It is very likely that it was precisely these minor manifestations of insignificant opposition that finally set Stalin on the course of mass terror within the Party.

Three such little attacks are known. The first occurred in 1930. Shortly after the Congress, Syrtsov<sup>2</sup> and Lominadze, supported by the Komsomol leader Shatskin, spoke out at a plenum of the TSK against Stalin's economic policy, which they labeled "Potemkin industrialization." Stalin was able to take care of them immediately. On December 1, by a decision of the TSK and the TSKK, without a plenum, Syrtsov and Lominadze were declared a "right-leftist group," were expelled from the TSK, and removed from their posts. Syrtsov had been chairman of the Council of the National Economy of the RSFSR, where he had just replaced Rykov.

The second attack occurred two years later. The year 1932 was marked by the appearance of the Riutin-Slepko group. These were apprentices to Bukharin and in their time had worked heroically to destroy various oppositions. Stalin had hardly begun to go after the rightists when Riutin began to regret the passing of inner-party democracy. An extensive program was worked out that called for a softening of the party regime, policy changes (including policy toward the peasantry), and the removal of Stalin. The program had hardly made its

way into Party circles when leaders of the rightists, led by Bukharin, hastened to dissociate themselves from it. Stalin took the case to court, but he did not get Riutin's head. The majority of the Politburo members preferred not to execute their recent comrade. There are rumors that Kuibyshev, Ordzhonikidze, and Kirov offered active resistance and were supported by Kosior and Kalinin. Voroshilov, Andreev, and Molotov took a temporizing position, while Kaganovich alone remained loyal to Stalin. All three opponents of terror were themselves soon dispatched: Kirov on December 1, 1934, Kuibyshev on January 25, 1935, Ordzhonikidze slightly later, on February 18, 1937. Kosior also perished, but later and in connection with other, Ukrainian, matters. Kalinin quickly learned to behave, as did his vacillating comrades. Nonetheless, in 1932 the Riutinists got only ten-year sentences, which did not keep them from disappearing in the bowels of the NKVD. Until the Great Purge got under way, any connection with the Riutin group, real or imagined, was certain cause for reprisal. Having known of the Riutin program and not having denounced it was cause for expulsion from the Party at the very least.

The third incident concerned the Eismont-A. P. Smirnov-Tolmachev group, which had barely reared its head at the end of 1932. These men, too, were unhappy with Stalin's violence and desired a change. A joint plenum of the TSK and TSKK, meeting January 7-12, 1933, expelled them from the Party. It was not announced in the press. There followed, as usual, a secret trial, long sentences, and death.

As we have seen in this brief digression, there were real difficulties, which did, however, contain the means for their own liquidation. After the Seventeenth Congress Stalin could no longer be content merely to hold off the attacks of the disgruntled. He understood that the next Congress might be his last.

It was impossible in Soviet conditions to establish a mechanism for lifelong rule, that is, a monarchy or legalized dictatorship. Stalin was sufficiently practical not to try to copy Bonaparte's career.

Stalin deserves some sympathy. His way was much harder than that of Mussolini or Hitler. Their power was based on nationalism and unquestionable personal authority ("the word of the leader is the highest law"), which had a certain mystical quality. It is even easier for the leaders of the young states of the "Third World" today, who act in a historical and cultural vacuum. They need no camouflage. Comrade (or Mr.?) Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Va Za Banga is called Chair-



man-Founder of the National Movement of Revolution. In a central African republic another joker, an ex-sergeant proclaimed himself emperor and his little country, with a population less than 2 million, an empire. It would be difficult even to imagine such escapades in the USSR. From the pre-Stalinist period there remained the heritage of centuries of history, three revolutions, official doctrine, and a ruling party. Traditions, people, books all interfered. They were all falsified, changed until they were unrecognizable, and destroyed. But it was impossible to carry this process to completion; something still remained.

There was another way. The political atmosphere could be changed in such a way as to remove all current pretenders to power, real and potential. More than that, conditions had to be created in which such people could not ever appear in the future. In such a case there would be no need to change the government structure, the national emblem, anthem, or flag. It was necessary only to widen the geography of terror, to include the Bolshevik Party within it, and to maximize centralization, concentrating in one man's hands all aspects of state-political life. Both these means had long been within the grasp of Soviet authorities. It is not surprising that Stalin resorted to them to pursue his personal goals.

The danger for the country was not that Stalin had such goals. Aspiration to power and megalomania greatly inflame the imagination, and people with such psychic constitutions are found in every society—in thousandth parts of a percent. Russia's tragedy was that this nightmare came true. The dreams of a paranoid maniac, rather than becoming a subject for psychiatric work, determined the life of the country for two decades. Everyone who is not indifferent to the fate of the Motherland should ask himself the heartrending question why it happened.

Until the mid-1930s the punitive functions of Soviet power were carried out within definite bounds. At the same time the continuity of repression was never disturbed. True, from the moment of the victory of the Stalin-Bukharin coalition at the Fifteenth Congress, the scale and tempo of arrests had steadily, although slowly at first, increased. Late in 1927 and early in 1928, hundreds of Trotskyites were sent into exile. In 1928, after the Shakhty affair, open season was declared on technical specialists and was carried out under the slogan of "struggle with wrecking." The trial of the Industrial Party (Prompartia), which took place in 1930, led to the sentencing of a number of prominent engineers. The next year important economists and finance experts

were tried in the Menshevik trial. The hunt for technicians, whom the country vitally needed, continued, but now purposefully. The Belomor-Baltic Canal was being constructed, actually being dug by hand. Because of it a large contingent of highly qualified hydrotechnicians fell into the hands of the OGPU, which was in charge of the project. The absolutely useless canal was being dug with feverish haste in the most unfavorable and difficult conditions, and the project cost tens of thousands of lives. Work was done almost exclusively by prisoners under the direction of Chekists. This building of the Egyptian pyramids was passed off as the rehabilitation through labor of "socially close" criminals. Political prisoners, as socially distant and foreign, had to perish without the joyful prospect of rebirth. The building of the Moscow-Volga Canal was carried out in the same way.

From 1929 to 1933 the system of repression displayed monstrous energy. Under the pretext of "dekulakization" millions of peasants were deported or shot. Propagandists babbled about destroying the kulaks as a class, while what was actually going on was the intentional physical destruction of the most enterprising and industrious peasants. The number of victims cannot be known precisely. Together with those who died of the unprecedented famine that accompanied collectivization, they may have totalled more than 15 million.

The paradelike spectacle of the Seventeenth Congress signaled the end of that period. Further repression directly served the aims of the state revolution as conceived by Stalin. The signal was given on December 1, 1934, with the death of Kirov. On that day, or according to some sources on the preceding day, the TSİK passed a law that provided for an accelerated and simplified investigation and trial of enemies of the people. Sentences could be carried out within forty-eight hours of being passed. Appeal was not permitted. It should be noted that this occurred in peacetime and in the absence of any major social disturbances, such as mutinies or rebellions. Even during the Civil War people sentenced to death could ask for pardon.<sup>3</sup>

Not losing a minute, Stalin hastened to avenge himself on his recent rivals in the Politburo. Kamenev and Zinoviev, since the latter had extensive contacts in Leningrad, were named conspirators in the murder of Kirov. The imaginary terrorist organization was for some reason called the "Moscow center." I. Evdokimov and several others were also implicated. The trial was conducted behind closed doors, but it limped along uneventfully and ended unsuccessfully for its organizers. Zinoviev

and Kamenev repented at length for their political errors, as they had a year earlier at the Congress; but they categorically denied having taken any part in the terror. The confusion was great, and the sentences were laughable. Zinoviev and Evdokimov got ten years' and Kamenev five years' imprisonment. Kamenev was subsequently tried again on July 27, 1935, and given a ten-year term. The charge was that while he was in prison he used his brother's wife, who worked in the Kremlin hospital, to organize an attempt on Stalin's life; the attempt was of course unsuccessful.

The absence of confessions weakened Stalin's position in the Politburo where Kuibyshev and Ordzhonikidze still opposed the use of extreme measures against Party leaders or even against former leaders. Stalin dealt with the first of them immediately. The sentencing of the Moscow center was made public on January 18. On January 25 Kuibyshev was officially mourned after his untimely demise. During the trial of Bukharin in 1938 the public learned that Kuibyshev had been medically murdered. Yagoda had ordered his death, Kuibyshev's secretary Maksimov-Dikovsky had organized it, and his doctors Levin and Pletnev had carried it out. In such cases it was usually Stalin who let the cat out of the bag, but others were accused of the crimes.<sup>4</sup> All telephone connections to the office of the seriously ill Kuibyshev had been severed. When his heart attack began, Maksimov could not call the medical department in the Kremlin. Nor could he decide to leave to get help, for there was no one nearby to stay with Kuibyshev. Finally he took Kuibyshev home.<sup>5</sup> Only an hour or so after the attack did Maksimov get medical help. Then they either administered the necessary medicine, or the delay had been sufficient. In any case he soon died. It is interesting that Maksimov's testimony at the trial largely corroborates this version. The misfire with Zinoviev and Kamenev held up the development of the campaign. Stalin had good reason to be upset with the NKVD and its chief G. Yagoda. The organs had everything needed in their hands, but they had not gotten the results.

The Great Leader of the world proletariat had to take care of things himself. Another trial was prepared. This time the fallen Bolshevik leaders were put on trial in the proper setting. Fourteen others were tried with them, including Evdokimov (a former secretary of the TSK) again and I. N. Smirnov (a former member of the TSK), a prominent associate of Trotsky. The political geography of the trial was broadened. This was advertised not as a trial of isolated conspirators but of a



powerful, far-flung organization, the Trotskyite-Zinovievite terrorist center. They were not just former leaders who stopped at nothing, including political murders, to regain their commanding positions. Things were much more serious. These were agents in a bitter class war, former oppositionists, now enemies of the people, who had behind them the remnants of the exploiters and foreign patrons, the fascists.

This was the first in a series of show trials. Its success was carefully prepared for. First of all, the notion was rejected that the guilt of the accused had to be proven. The Procurator General A. Vyshinsky proclaimed that the presumption of innocence was a bourgeois prejudice, for which he was made a member of the Academy of Sciences. Now it was enough that during the preliminary investigation, while he was entirely in the power of the NKVD, a citizen confess to being an enemy of the people. (Other suspects sometimes did so also, but usually the confession and NKVD custody went together.) He would then automatically fall under the extraordinary law. After that he would be tried in an extrajudicial procedure (which was a widely used phrase in those years). Other evidence of guilt was not required; therefore no material evidence was presented at the trials.

Vyshinsky widely expanded the concept of criminal conspiracy and complicity. People who had not even known of one another's existence until the investigation or trial, but who had allegedly acted on orders from a single center, were now defined as accomplices. This made it possible to select a useful combination of victims.

The investigator had but one task—to extract from the prisoner a confession of guilt that had already been worked out by the NKVD. They could use any means to their ends, including torture. In response to a secret directive from Stalin the TSIK legalized physical torture in 1936. They managed, for example, to break I. N. Smirnov, a man of strong will and personal courage. They “refreshed” him with ice baths until he lost all interest in living. He acted detached and indifferent at the trial and shrugged off Vyshinsky's questioning: “You need a leader? I'll be your leader. . . .”

Self-slander was the main weapon of the prosecution, but not its only one. The accused were forced to slander one another as well. This cross-pollination yielded bountiful fruit. Entirely isolated from the outside world, a man soon learned that he had nowhere to go. If he insisted on his innocence, he would be convicted by the testimony of



other prisoners; these might be old friends, comrades of the underground and fronts, or, often, complete strangers. The investigators persuaded him that such evidence was sufficiently damning for the court and that only candid repentance, that is, accepting the NKVD version, could ameliorate the sentence. All of that was of course combined with torture. Most such prisoners were unable to stay out of the devilish trap. To the very stubborn other pressures were brought to bear: the families of some were threatened; others were persuaded to give evidence as an act of Party discipline (strange as it may seem, this was from time to time effective).

All these crushing pressures proved nonetheless to be insufficient at first in the preparations for a new Zinoviev trial. It is said that Zinoviev and Kamenev resisted all pressures to accept the charge of organizing terror, because it supposedly contradicted their Marxist convictions. That put Stalin in a difficult position. He could not permit a second failure. But Josef Vissarionovich was not the sort to shrink from problems. It wasn't only coincidence that the song "who desires shall achieve, who seeks will always find . . ." was popular at the time. Stalin sought a way to win. He sent his friend Ordzhonikidze to see the stubborn men.<sup>6</sup> They would not have spoken with any of the other current members of the Politburo—Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov, or Mikoyan. On Stalin's orders Sergo told them roughly the following: You have lost. Stalin's line is victorious on all fronts; you said so yourselves at the Congress. Now the Party desperately needs a dramatic political trial to help it in its struggle with hidden enemies. If you do not admit to terror, you will be liquidated without a trial, and your families will not be spared. If you confess, you will be given the mandatory sentence, execution by shooting, but your lives will be spared, and your families will not be harmed. I guarantee that on my word as a Bolshevik.

After long hesitation Zinoviev and Kamenev accepted the deal. They behaved loyally at the trial. All the accused were sentenced to be shot—and they were executed.

One other novelty was tried out during that trial. The accused named as accomplices people who were still at liberty, which served as an excuse to bring them to justice. Serebriakov and Preobrazhensky suffered that fate in August 1936. Cases were quickly worked up against them. A short while later Sokolnikov and others were linked with them. Allusions to the complicity of the rightists provoked anguished

cries from the press. The same recurred in January 1937. The question of their prosecution was decided at the February-March plenum of the TSK.<sup>7</sup>

The long-winded confessions and mutual accusations gave the Moscow trials a certain degree of verisimilitude, especially in the eyes of Western observers sympathetic to the USSR. Even an old hand like Leon Feuchtwanger fell for the trap. To fortify the impression, regular provocateurs of the NKVD were included among the accused. They readily gave the needed testimony, and then they were executed with the rest.<sup>8</sup>

Participating in the rehearsals for the August show cost Ordzhonikidze his life. Fiery Bolshevik that Sergo was, he could not free himself of some bourgeois prejudices. When he gave the prisoners his word as a revolutionary, he was sincere and meant to keep it. In February 1937 he learned that Zinoviev and Kamenev had been killed nonetheless. He had an angry disagreement with Stalin. The Great Leader understood that his old comrade was a lost man, stubborn in his misconceptions. A week before the opening of a very important plenum of the TSK, of February 18, Ordzhonikidze was shot by a Chekist in the office of his Kremlin apartment.<sup>9</sup> Stalin announced to members of the Politburo in top secret that Ordzhonikidze had cracked under the pressure of the struggle and had killed himself. To preserve his good Bolshevik name it was decided to announce to the nation that he had died unexpectedly of a heart attack.

The first trial achieved its goal. The atmosphere in the country became intense. Stalin considered the moment opportune to seize the punitive organs, all the more so since during his absence on vacation to the south there had been indecisive wavering in the Moscow leadership. Nikolai Ezhov, secretary of the TSK, who had accumulated his power in the bowels of the secret Stalin chancellery, was made head of the NKVD. The smooth success of the August trial did not save Yagoda. His replacement had been foreordained by a telegram from Stalin and Zhdanov.<sup>10</sup>

Ezhov was the ideal man for the task assigned him. In contrast to Menzhinsky and Yagoda he did not have a distinguished revolutionary past or corresponding ambitions. Raised by Stalin's hands, he viewed the world through Stalin's eyes. In bloodthirstiness and suspicion he surpassed even his patron.

The tempo of persecution accelerated. The trial of the parallel terror-

ist center (Piatakov, Sokolnikov, Serebriakov, and Radek) began in January 1937. The country was told that the enemy had a gigantic organization with many branches to carry on in case one should fail. Hints, which were first made in August, that military people had participated in the plots were repeated more strongly here. (We will speak of that in detail below.) The trials' techniques were improved. Lawyers were now permitted to participate. Sentences were varied; some defendants received prison sentences rather than being shot. A well-rehearsed public raged in the papers and at meetings. Western leftists applauded.

Now the offensive could be opened along the whole front. It remained only to get formal approval from the country's high court. It is said that the TSK turned Stalin down in September 1936. Apparently by spring the evidence presented was sufficient. After meeting for a week the Party priests gave Stalin *carte blanche* for a campaign of terror. The country was put under an unannounced state of emergency. Postyshev tried to protest, but Stalin leaned on him, and the others preferred to remain silent. Myopic, never able to think for themselves, overwhelmed by the roar of propaganda, they pronounced a death sentence for themselves and for millions of their countrymen.

After the February-March plenum all the semaphores on Stalin's way to absolute power had been raised. He had won in the center by demoralizing the Party leadership, taking control of the NKVD, and frightening the government. The state revolution was a *fait accompli*. The repression spread far and wide to force acceptance of the new order.

There was still one force in the country that Stalin could leave unsubdued only at risk of his own neck. That was the Army. Before we describe the circumstance of its destruction, we must first make a necessary digression.

It is very tempting to blame the terror of the 1930s on a single individual, Stalin. We would be wrong to do so, however. Frequent reference to his name was necessary only to make the telling of the story easier. There is too much that suggests that the regime established by Stalin was a natural stage in the development of Bolshevism.

The roots of the Stalin dictatorship, as it became in 1936-38 and remained until 1953, must be sought first of all (but not exclusively) in the human material from which the Bolshevik Party was composed. The Tolstoyans did not flock to the Bolsheviks; nor would they have been welcome. The Bolsheviks were always distinguished by their



desire to solve all social problems by a single blow, by violence and terror. Therefore it was natural that the man who made terror a daily part of state policy and perfected hypocrisy as an ideology was able to keep himself at the pinnacle of power for so long. Violence in the name of future justice and dishonesty for the sake of narrow Party interest were from its first days the alpha and omega of the regime. Blaming it all on Stalin explains very little. Stalin was great because he relied only on these principles. He never tied his hands with collateral considerations or sentimental memories. He relied not on specific people but on the basic psychology of his Party.

His reliance was justified. The mass of the Party accepted and supported the terror. Even those who fell under the NKVD's wheels remained faithful to the Bolshevik ideal and Stalin's policy to the end. In the name of higher Party interests they gave false testimony, which proved fatal to themselves and others. They died with the Party's name on their lips. It is terrible to say, but they deserved their fate.

Stalin not only wrote the script and directed the terror. Knowing from the history of the French Revolution that instigators of slaughter usually lost their heads, he feared it as much as anyone else. It was a justified premonition. He was later destroyed and defamed by the same psychology, the same system of views, that had earlier raised him up. Stalin was not joking or being hypocritical when he told numerous supplicants that he himself feared the NKVD. Ezhov was personally devoted to Stalin and never thought to harm him even when he found himself on the brink of the abyss. Beria in a similar situation would have behaved more rationally.

Stalin was not an exception, not a pathological accident. He was an organic figure in a communist regime, just as were Rakosi, Gottwald, and Bierut. The last, by the way, worked as an investigator for the NKVD in the USSR under the assumed name Rutkovsky. The idealist Dubček held power for only a few months, while Gomulka, who came into power on a wave of national enthusiasm for freedom and justice, ended his days with anti-Semitic agitation and shooting workers' demonstrations.

It is unscientific and untrue to say that it was only the personal power of Stalin that grew stronger in the 1930s. Although the means used to achieve those ends may seem inhuman and insane, the power of the Party was consolidated as well.

We should not forget that already in the early 1930s Stalin personified the Party for all without exception, even for his enemies. Had



Maiakovsky lived until then, he could have quite correctly written, "We say the Party and mean Stalin, and vice versa."

Even Trotsky, who was by then exiled, damned, and slandered in his native land, held to that point of view. He wrote to his son, L. Sedov, that he could not use the slogan "Down with Stalin!" If anti-Soviet forces were ever to raise their heads in the USSR, then he, Trotsky, would have to at least temporarily come out in support of Stalin.

Many Party leaders saw the harm of Stalin's political line and opposed it, but they consciously avoided calling openly for the removal of the tyrant. They were more concerned for the authority of the Party than they were for its power. They clung to the Party-Stalin fetish right to the grave. In the name of Party discipline and solidarity they did willingly what Yagoda and Ezhov could not achieve with torture. They piled the most absurd slander on themselves and others when every letter of accusation became a mountain of corpses.

We are told that they believed in the Party; we should not doubt their faith. But we should ask why they thought only of the Party and forgot completely about the people to whom, supposedly, they had dedicated their lives? Why did they never look for support among the people?

The answer to that question screams the merciless, murderous truth. They were always strangers to their people. They always stood above their people, with an admonishing finger or a threatening sword. They considered only their Party comrades to be worthy of freedom, justice, well-being. The people were for them the masses, building material, clay, objects, guinea pigs for untried experiments. On the way to power they constantly proclaimed that the good of the people was the highest law, but once they had gained that longed-for power by the hands of the people, they sat on the people's necks and proudly announced that they would not be guided by the backward sentiments of the masses. From the first day they set about driving and herding the masses to the next abyss.

That is why they did not appeal to the people. For millions of their countrymen a Bolshevik was a stranger and an oppressor. In the terrible year of the destruction of the peasantry, Bolsheviks who did not agree with the policy preferred to hold their theoretical debates in Kremlin offices and the halls of the Communist Academy. The Bukharinites, foes of the forced collectivization, did not turn to the nation, did not extend their hand to the little brothers, against whom the NKVD carried out undisguised genocide. Trotsky greeted collectivization sympathet-

ically. He tried only to defend his priority in the matter. He wrote angry philippics from abroad on the occasion of every imprisonment or removal of his proponents, but he did not say a word about the suffering or death of millions of muzhiks.

After the unprecedented violence the Bolsheviks had no way back to the people, whom they had betrayed and condemned to starvation and death. Instead there was a headlong rush to their own graves, under the Party banner, under the leadership of Stalin.

One had only to read Bukharin's political testament. "I am leaving life. I bow my head, not before the proletariat's ax which must be merciless but chaste . . ." and so on to the end . . . "earlier the revolutionary idea justified cruelty to our enemies [so it was all right to kill others]. . . . Storm clouds hung over the Party." Party solidarity was his only standard: "It has already been seven years since I have had even a shade of disagreement with the Party." (On the eve of the destruction of the peasantry Bukharin disagreed, but that disagreement had vanished? In 1937 he agreed with the Party when it preached terror? So long as it didn't get him?) The blinders of Party thought hindered his vision. Nothing else existed, not the Motherland, not close friends. In the face of death Bukharin could not find a single word of sorrow or of love. Only Party, struggle, blood. "I have never been a traitor. For the life of Lenin I would have given my own without hesitation. I loved Kirov. I did not plot against Stalin. . . . Know, comrades, that on that banner which you carry in the victorious march to communism, there is a drop of my blood." Period. Nothing more to be said.

If the Party were dearer to them than anything else on earth—the nation, justice, truth—and if Stalin were the personification of the Party, then everything that might benefit him would have to be met with hymns of welcome, not excluding even their own deaths. The mass destruction of Party members did not threaten the Party's power. On the contrary, the Party's power was fortified. It was historically progressive, at least until the process came under Stalin's aegis and was directed by his will. And even after that, however many necks they broke, the Party's primacy was preserved.

If all the squabbling and bloodshed had not gone beyond the pack of professional conspirators, the whole subject would interest only Party historians. To the misfortune of the people, however, there was an extremely powerful amplifier between the Party and the people; and for

every Bolshevik who perished, there were five, ten, or more non-Party, simple citizens who had never read Marx, Trotsky, or Stalin and who could not see the differences among them. They were unable even to begin to understand why they were being sent to camps or killed.

And this wasn't the end of the country's grief, only its beginning. The merciless inner-Party conflict broke out at a time when the smell of powder was abroad in the world, but the ambitious politicians were too maddened to pay heed. On the threshold of war they dealt a fatal blow to the undefended rear of their own Army.

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## 18 Preparing for the Harvest

Such acts as the destruction of a huge army do not happen suddenly or all by themselves. The undermining of the RKKA was begun along with the state revolution. For a long while there were no external marks to betray the progress of the work.

After the military-historical discoveries of 1929 and the bandit raid of 1930, Stalin's relations with the military leadership seemed unclouded. Tukhachevsky was brought back from his Leningrad exile and entrusted with an important post to take charge of rearming the Red Army as he had suggested. Military specialists were freed and returned to work. The reorganized army was filled with strength and worked hard. The generals were showered with favors and distinctions. The stern warriors in their turn found much to praise in their great leader. There was no end to the idyllic alliance, it seemed.

On May 4, 1935, Stalin spoke at a Kremlin banquet for the graduates of the Red Army Academy. It was in that speech he introduced the famous slogan "The cadres decide everything."<sup>1</sup>

The timing of the new policy should not be surprising. Stalin's explanation was that earlier, when we were so backward, technical matters had to be in first place. Then, when we moved out of our backward stage, when we advanced (very rapidly in just five or six years, but this did not surprise anyone), the main thing became the people, especially people with technical skills. Technical things themselves, what are they? We had a surplus of them in the Army (along with a million horses, which the speaker did not mention), and everywhere else. Therefore, he reasoned, armed to the teeth with first-class technical weapons, we replaced the old slogan with a new one.

That May 4 speech also contained hints that the opposition had threatened to use terror: "We chose the plan of attack [meaning accelerated industrialization] and went ahead on the Leninist path leaving behind those comrades who could see only as far as their noses who closed their eyes to the near future of our country, to the future of socialism."

But the matter had become much more serious. Those comrades



did not always limit themselves to criticism and passive resistance. They threatened us with rebellion in the Party against the Central Committee. More than that: they threatened some of us with bullets. Apparently they thought to frighten us and force us to turn away from the Leninist path. These people must have forgotten that we Bolsheviks are a special kind of people. They forgot that you do not frighten Bolsheviks with difficulties or threats. . . . Understandably, we never even thought to swerve from the Leninist way. More than that, having determined on that path we went more determinedly ahead, sweeping from the road all and every obstacle. True, along the way we had to thrash a few of those comrades. I must confess that I too had a hand in the matter. (Stormy applause, shouts of "hurrah.")

The interpretation of the facts did not seem overly logical. It is one thing when some *comrades* (without quotation marks) do not see farther than their own noses and close their eyes to the future of socialism. This is a sad defect of vision called myopia. But what were they doing threatening rebellion and bullets? An explanation was in order. No one noticed the contradiction. They were all saving their breath for the next hurrahs.

Stalin did not insert the passage just for eloquence. No one had threatened him with bullets, but he was busily preparing the way for the opposition's confessions of planning terror. He was just saying what was on his mind. Chronology will help us here. The speech was made on May 4. The first Zinoviev trial, which was heavily but unsuccessfully embroidered with accusations of plans to shoot the leaders, had taken place in January. Another case prepared that summer was not publicized: Kamenev was accused of planning while he was in prison to murder Stalin. Soon after the banquet, on July 27, a secret trial took place, and that time Kamenev, who admitted to nothing, escaped the firing squad.

Nearer the end of his long moralizing toast Stalin told a little story. In light of later events it reads like a masterpiece of hypocrisy:

I recall an incident from distant Siberia where I was once in exile. . . . About thirty men went to the river to gather wood that had been washed up by the huge, turbulent river. Toward evening they returned to the village but without one of their comrades. To the question about where the thirtieth man was they answered

indifferently that the thirtieth had “stayed there.” To my question “What do you mean, stayed there?” they replied with the same indifference, “What’s to ask? He drowned.” At that point one of them hurried off somewhere saying he had to go milk the cow. To my admonition that they cared more for the cattle than for people one of them answered to the general approval of the rest, “Why should we care for them, for people? We can always make people. But a cow . . . just try to make a cow.”

The moral was even shorter than the story: “It seems to me that the indifferent attitude of some of our leaders to people, to cadres, and the inability to value people is a vestige of that strange relationship of people to people that was apparent in this episode in distant Siberia.”

It would add little to comment on more such pearls. They should be learned by heart. The speech’s finale was prophetic:

If our Army will have real hardened cadres in sufficiency, it will be unbeatable. To your health, comrades! (Stormy applause throughout the hall. All rise and greet comrade Stalin with loud shouts of “Hurrah.”)

The year 1935 passed and ended well for the Army. A resolution in November announced the introduction of personal military titles. Until then the RKKA had managed for seventeen years without them. There were Red Armymen, junior commanders, and commanders. The commanders wore distinguishing emblems on collar tabs: triangles, cubes, rectangles, and rhombuses, which corresponded to their duties. Personal titles demonstrated the concern of the Party, the government, and comrade Stalin personally for our armed forces, and more important they were a step on the way back to old-regime style. Most of the titles still reflected posts: brigade commander, division commander, corps commander, and army commander; but there were also lieutenants, captains, majors, colonels, and marshals. In 1939 lieutenant colonel was added, and in 1940, general. From there it was a small step to shoulder straps, that very feature by which the enemy was recognized in the Civil War.

Nothing was heard about repression of the military in 1935. With one exception. The Red commander Yakov Okhotnikov was arrested and shortly thereafter shot.

Stalin, as everyone who knew him has noted, was gifted with an

exceptional memory. It was not difficult for him in 1935 to remember an event from 1927. Just before November 7, the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, the struggle between the Stalinists and the Zinoviev-Trotsky faction reached a critical point. Oppositionist demonstrations were expected in Moscow and Leningrad, in connection with which special precautions were taken. Not only the Chekists but also students from the military academies were made to guard the invaluable lives of the leaders lined up on the speakers' platform at the mausoleum. On the day of the celebrations R. P. Eideman, head of the Frunze Academy, entrusted three of his pupils with special passes and ordered them to hurry to their assignment. Along with Okhotnikov (who, incidentally had been Yakir's adjutant during the Civil War), Vladimir Petenko, and Arkady Geller raced to Red Square. They got into the Kremlin without any trouble, but at the wooden gate to the tunnel leading to the speakers' stand they were detained. The guard, a Georgian, refused to let them pass. The hotheaded trio were not daunted by the insolence of the Chekist. They knocked him aside, breaking the gate in the process,<sup>2</sup> and hurried on. In seconds they were up behind those standing on the tribune. Guards jumped the newcomers, but Okhotnikov got loose and leaped to Stalin, whom he somehow considered responsible for the annoying confusion, and punched him in the head. At that moment Stalin's bodyguard drew a knife—it was forbidden to shoot—and wounded Okhotnikov in the hand. Officers present intervened and ended the scuffle. Okhotnikov was given first aid, and the three were let go. That night they were sent for. Okhotnikov had prudently spent the night away from home. Geller and Potenko were seized. Eideman managed to hush up the affair.

The night of November 7, Stalin suffered a serious attack of paranoia, for which Professor V. M. Bekhterev treated him. That visit, or more accurately that diagnosis, cost the famous psychiatrist his life. He was poisoned on Stalin's orders. Stalin did not try to make anything of the incident at the time; he was not in a position to do so. Eight years later he got even with the man who had insulted him. Petenko and Geller perished in 1937.

In 1936, when physical destruction of the opposition was begun, the Army was not forgotten. Military men were taken, not yet in large numbers and without special fuss, but with an eye to the future. Most of the early arrests were made in the provinces.<sup>3</sup> The NKVD worked especially hard in the Ukraine. On July 5 Division Commander Dmitri

Shmidt, commander of the only heavy tank brigade then in the RKKA, and Boris Kuzmichev, chief-of-staff of large air force units, were seized. Both were trusted associates of Yakir. Division Commander Yu. Sablin and others suffered the same fate.<sup>4</sup> They included another of Yakir's comrades from the time of the Civil War, N. Golubenko, then chairman of the Dnepropetrovsk provincial executive committee. It is said that he had spoken out against repression.

As the repression grew, Stalin began to pay back old debts. As he remembered Okhotnikov, he was bound to remember Shmidt. Shmidt, son of a Jewish cobbler, a projectionist from Priluki, joined the Party in 1915. He fought bravely on several fronts with a corps of Red Cossacks; after the war he commanded a Cossack division. In the 1920s he was an active Trotskyite. A former partisan and a man of desperate courage, Shmidt had little use for idols or authority. Trotsky's expulsion from the Party on the eve of the Fifteenth Congress enraged him. He drove to Moscow and found Stalin during a break between meetings. Wrapped in a long Circassian coat, with a tall sheepskin hat on his head, he strode up to the General Secretary. He swore at him and brandishing an imaginary sword threatened, "Watch out, Koba. I'll cut your ears off!"

Stalin had to swallow that offense. The time had not yet come to accuse the opposition of terror. They were still talking about illegal printing presses. In 1936 he of the long memory not only avenged himself on Shmidt but made political hay of it. At the August trial the first of the witnesses, Mrachkovsky, told of the existence of a "group of murderers" in the Army, led by Shmidt. Later Dreitser implicated Putna. I. N. Smirnov repudiated that testimony, but Pikel, Reingold, and Bakaev confirmed it. Several days later Procurator General Vyshinsky announced that a number of people mentioned in the testimony of the accused would be tried separately under the laws of special procedure. Among them were Shmidt and Kuzmichev.

Putna was not mentioned, but that is easily explained. At the time he was military attaché in London. Had legal proceedings been begun against him, he would likely not have returned. He was simply recalled to Moscow, and in September he was arrested. That is how the first of the eight to be tried in the June 1937 trial fell into the paws of the NKVD. Apparently, however, no definite plans had yet been worked out about what use to make of Putna.

The NKVD and the Procuracy concentrated on Shmidt in the fall of 1936. A military man and a Trotskyite, he would have to be the



connecting link between the oppositionists and the conspirators in the Army.

There was a slight hitch in September in the mechanism of the widening repression. Someone in the TSK tried to oppose Stalin while he was away from Moscow on vacation. There was even talk about a secret plenum of the TSK where Stalin was still in a minority on the question of terror. This seems unlikely, if only because a plenum could not take place in Stalin's absence. Nonetheless, it was in September that signs of an anti-Stalinist movement appeared. An announcement was made on the tenth that the case against Rykov and Bukharin was being dropped. An open circular of the TSK that speaks of the necessity of stopping baseless repression is dated September 21. With it there was also a call to watchfulness and provision for the prosecution of real enemies, but nonetheless this was a slap at Stalin.

In this fateful hour Stalin reacted immediately and effectively. The famous telegram about replacing Yagoda was sent on the twenty-fifth; formalities occupied a few days, and by the thirtieth Nikolai Ivanovich Ezhov had taken over his job. He appointed two new assistants—Matvei Berman, former chief of Gulag, and Mikhail Frinovsky, former chief of border forces—and set to work.

The second show trial began on January 21, 1937, the anniversary of Ilich's death. Piatakov, Sokolnikov, Serebriakov, and Livshits freely gave testimony about their reserve (parallel) terroristic center, which had been established in case of the failure of the main center headed by Zinoviev and Kamenev. As the accused had spent many years in economic work, much time was devoted to describing their various heroic deeds of wrecking, most of which are indistinguishable from normal slovenliness and fraud.<sup>5</sup> Their attempts to kill the Party leaders, all of which had failed, of course, were not left out.

Among the accused was also Karl Radek, the gasbag, teller of jokes, and pen pusher, who in the early 1930s turned from an oppositionist into a Stalinist minion and informer.<sup>6</sup> According to the trial's scenario, Radek was not involved in terrorism or wrecking. His role was his connection with Trotsky. Radek betrayed Bukharin, he sang the NKVD's praises ("It wasn't the interrogators who tortured us, but we who tortured them"), and dropped most damaging hints about the participation of military men in the plots. At one of the morning sessions he testified: "Vitaly [correctly Vitovt] Putna met with me in 1935 to ask a favor from Tukhachevsky." Somehow Vyshinsky did not pick up

on that fact and led the questioning off in a different direction.

The evening of that same day he returned to that theme. (This supports the likely supposition that Tukhachevsky hurried to explain the matter to Voroshilov and Stalin, after which Vyshinsky got orders to formally exonerate the marshal, which he did in a characteristically strange way. Vyshinsky asked Radek why Tukhachevsky had approached him. From the trial records:

RADEK: Tukhachevsky had a government assignment for which he could not find necessary material. Only I had the material. He called to ask if I had that material. I had it, and Tukhachevsky sent Putna, with whom he was working on the assignment, to get the material from me. Tukhachevsky had no idea of Putna's role, nor of my criminal role.

VYSHINSKY: And Putna?

R: He was a member of the organization. He did not come on organization business, but I used his visit to have a needed conversation.

V: And Tukhachevsky?

R: Tukhachevsky was never associated with our cause. . . . I affirm that I never had and never could have had any association with Tukhachevsky along the lines of counterrevolutionary activity, because I knew that Tukhachevsky was a man absolutely devoted to the Party and the government.

Radek said the word "material" four times, but the procurator never asked about its contents. He was not even interested in what the conspirators Putna and Radek were talking about. For Vyshinsky the incident was closed, but for Tukhachevsky it would turn out badly. The association of his name with such company threw a long shadow. Further explanations only raised more suspicions. What does an honest man need with a flattering character witness from the known counterrevolutionary Radek? Even the form of Radek's announcement put one on guard. It could seem that in singing the marshal's praises and denying even the possibility of associating with him, he was trying to distract attention from a deeply implicated coconspirator. In 1937 that interpretation was considered sufficient proof.<sup>7</sup>

One of the eight, Putna was kept at the Lubianka. Tukhachevsky was publicly shamed. Yakir felt "like a beast in a pen." After all, Shmidt and Kuzmichev were accused of planning to kill the People's Commis-

sar in Yakir's office. Yakir must be given his due. He tried to break the closing ring. He went to Stalin and told him he did not believe either Shmidt or Kuzmichev guilty, and that in general he did not especially trust Ezhov. Stalin, always sympathetic to Yakir, met him halfway. He granted him an interview with Shmidt. The prisoner looked terrible; he had the "look of a Martian." The meeting did not last long. Shmidt did, however, have time to tell the commander that the charges were lies and give him a note for Voroshilov.

Yakir visited the People's Commissar, gave him the note, and told him he was convinced that the prisoners were innocent. Yakir had barely returned to Kiev when Voroshilov called to say that under questioning Shmidt had confessed that he had gulled Yakir and himself. He confirmed his earlier testimony. P. Yakir, the Army commander's son, writes: "In this same conversation Voroshilov informed [my father] that Corps Commander Garkavy had been arrested. Father sat down in an armchair and put his head in his hands. Ilia Ivanovich Garkavy was my father's oldest friend from 1917. He was also a relative, the husband of mother's sister."<sup>8</sup>

When did this happen? According to P. Yakir, his father was at the Lubianka and with Voroshilov on the seventeenth or eighteenth, returned to Kiev, spoke on the telephone with Voroshilov, and on the next day returned to Moscow to be present at the trial that was to begin on the twenty-first. Returning to Kiev for only a day or two seems strange. Why would he waste more than a day on the road for only a day at home? If we accept a date of April from other sources for Garkavy's arrest, then this episode must have occurred at the end of April or the beginning of May. This is more likely, as M. F. Lukin, a former subordinate of Yakir and commandant of Moscow in 1937, recalls accompanying Yakir from the city in May shortly before his arrest.<sup>9</sup>

Another of Yakir's old friends, Yakov Livshits, was tried at the January trial. He was an old working-class Bolshevik from before the Revolution who had long worked in the Cheka-OGPU. Most recently he had been Deputy People's Commissar of Transportation. Livshits confessed to everything that was demanded of him, but just before he was shot he cried out, "Why?" Yakir heard of it.

In 1937 Tukhachevsky, Yakir, Uborevich, and other monsters were sentenced to be shot. Elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR took place after that. The elections gave Soviet authority 98.6 percent of the vote. . . . One asks where are the signs of "decay" here, and why was the "decay" evident in the elections?

—Stalin

Value the cadres as the gold reserve of the party and state, treasure them, respect them.

—Stalin

We will now describe what happened in the Army in 1937 and 1938. We cannot draw a complete picture of what happened. Therefore we will concentrate on a few episodes and aspects of the larger events.

*Tukhachevsky.* In early May 1937 the marshal's scheduled trip to the coronation ceremonies in London was suddenly cancelled, supposedly because of the planned assassination attempt in Warsaw. Flag-officer V. M. Orlov, Commander of Naval Forces (VMS), was sent instead. On May 11 Voroshilov summoned Tukhachevsky and informed him that he had been removed from his duties as first deputy people's commissar and appointed commander of the troops of the Volga Military District. The announcement was curt, completely official, and without explanation. Tukhachevsky was stunned; all the memoirists agree on that. He asked Stalin for an explanation. The story goes that Stalin reassured the marshal, explaining his removal by his close acquaintance with several of the accused in the recent trial. "But we trust you. It would be better for you to leave Moscow temporarily, and when the rumors die down, we will bring you back."

Tukhachevsky arrived in Samara (now Kuibyshev) on May 26 and set about taking over from his old friend P. E. Dybenko, but that very day he was arrested.

*Yakir.* On May 23 Yakir, a member of the TSK VKP(b) and the Politburo of the TSK(b) of the Ukraine, received an official secret



paper, which informed him of Tukhachevsky's arrest and asked for his concurrence about initiating a criminal case. Yakir replied that he did not doubt for a second that Tukhachevsky was innocent, but he would not object to a trial seeing it as the best possible means for explaining all the circumstances of the case. On the twenty-ninth, or more likely the thirtieth, Voroshilov phoned the Army commander and ordered him to come to Moscow immediately for a meeting of the Military Council. There were no more trains that day for Moscow, and Yakir wanted to take a plane. Voroshilov did not permit that, however, and ordered him to use the personal train at his disposal as commander. Yakir set off about 1:00 A.M. on the thirty-first. During the night his car was uncoupled at Briansk. Agents of the central apparatus of the NKVD seized the sleepy Yakir and took him by car to the Lubyanka.

*Primakov.* Also called to Moscow, Primakov set off in a personal train. When Chekists tried to arrest him along the way, he made use of his Red Cossack past and with the help of his personal guard put them to flight. He called Voroshilov. The People's Commissar answered, "There has been a misunderstanding. Some people are coming who will explain everything." Soon a reinforced detachment of NKVD arrived. Primakov surrendered his Mauser and went to the Lubyanka.

*Gamarnik.* He was sick during the last days of May and lay at home. One of those days, probably the thirty-first, he was visited by his assistant, A. S. Bulin,<sup>1</sup> and Assistant Chief of the General Staff Smorodinov, who asked for the key to a safe that contained materials needed for a meeting of the Military Council. Gamarnik was depressed. He already knew of the arrest of Tukhachevsky and others. His visitors tried to calm him. Soon they left. About an hour later agents of the NKVD arrived. As his daughter opened the door to the new guests, two pistol shots rang out in his room. According to another version, Gamarnik shot himself immediately after Bulin and Smorodinov's visit, and they heard the shots as they departed.<sup>2</sup>

In an official communiqué Gamarnik was called an accomplice of those on trial. (Stalin referred to him at a Military Council meeting on June 4 as "Gamarnik who is absent from court.") There are two other possible explanations for his suicide: to avoid being a member of the Military College of the Supreme Court, or to avoid giving testimony against the others accused.

*Uborevich.* He was grabbed on May 29. It is hard to say exactly where that occurred. According to his daughter it was on the way from

Smolensk to Moscow. According to other sources, it happened on the station platform as he got off the train.

We have already mentioned Putna's arrest. Kork, Feldman, and Eideman worked in Moscow. They were arrested in the second half of May. If it is true that Feldman was relieved of his duties on May 28, that is probably the date of his arrest. It seems that Yakir already knew of it in Kiev. There are some indications that Eideman was arrested on the twenty-second, during the Moscow Party conference, for association with Kork, who had been seized a few days earlier.

Besides these, the NKVD arrested other prominent men: at the end of April the chief of the international department of the People's Commissariat of Defense, Corps Commander A. I. Gekker, and the commander of the Urals district, Corps Commander I. I. Garkavy, were seized (both were shot on July 1, 1937). Corps Commander A. Ia. Lapin, former chief-of-staff of the Special Far Eastern Red Banner Army, was arrested on May 11. Exact dates are not known, but in any case before the trial began, even before June 1, the chief of the Administration of Antiaircraft Defense, Commander of the Second Army A. I. Sediakin, Chief of the Academy of the General Staff Division Commander D. A. Kuchinsky, Chief of the Political Administration of the Leningrad Military District, Army Commissar Second Class I. E. Slavin, and professor of the Frunze Academy, Corps Commander G. D. Gai (Bzhishkian) were all arrested.

Gai had to be arrested twice. He was first arrested on the night of June 2-3, 1935, in Minsk. An NKVD special conference in Moscow gave him five years in prison. On the way to the political isolation prison in Iaroslavl, Gai managed to break a board out of the floor of the railroad car and jump out. He injured his leg but still had enough strength to reach the nearest field with haystacks. Despite his pain the old soldier covered his tracks well. He made a depression in the hay, climbed in, and fell asleep. A general alarm was soon raised throughout the district and hundreds of eager *komsomoltsy* (young communists) led by Chekists combed the fields and forests. They looked under every bush, poked bayonets into every haystack and stock of grain. All the *komsomoltsy* carried enlarged photographs of Gai, but they did not find him.<sup>3</sup>

Gai successfully slept through that ceremony in his honor. When he woke, he decided not to run any farther and to ask for help. His leg hurt tremendously, and he had nothing to eat. Reaching a village, he went to

the nearest hut. The owner recognized Gai, as he had once served under him, and told him that he was being searched for. Several days later Gai decided to go to Moscow, but the peasant dissuaded him. "Come to the station," Gai told him. "Look. Are the pictures of Lenin and Stalin still hanging?" They were. "That means the Soviet authority still exists!" Gai walked out on the platform. He considered his arrest an arbitrary act of the NKVD. The stationmaster recognized him also and advised him to hide. Gai demanded to be connected with Moscow by telephone, and on a direct line he spoke with Voroshilov, who reassured him that some people were being sent for him who would explain everything. He did not have long to wait. In the Lubianka, Gai was put in the same cell with Putna. He still did not understand what had happened. "When they start to tear the skin from your back, you'll understand it all!" answered Putna.<sup>4</sup>

*Blucher.* The first repressions against the Army barely touched the Far East. All of 1937 and the first half of the next year passed relatively peacefully there. Only in the summer of 1938 did mass arrests begin in the OKDVA, the Separate Far Eastern Red Banner Army. L. S. Mekhlis, Chief of the Political Administration of the RKKA, and Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs Frinovsky arrived there at the end of May on separate trains. Soon thereafter commanders were seized by the hundreds.

It cannot be said that the moment was well chosen. The situation along the border was extremely tense, thanks to Stalin. The great leader had gotten the idea that the Far East was a powder keg, that the Chinese and Koreans, living under the heel of Japan, were only waiting for a spark to set off the flame of wars of national liberation.

In June 1938 the OKDVA was reorganized as the Far Eastern Front comprised of the 1st and 2nd Separate Red Banner Armies. Blucher remained its commander. The NKVD, which had charge of all reconnaissance, continuously warned him that the Japanese were about to attack. The deployment of Soviet troops could not fail to put the Japanese on their guard.<sup>5</sup>

The punitive organs were assigned the task of striking the spark. There were sectors where the border was not demarcated; however, border patrols from both sides walked definite routes daily and no confrontations had taken place. Late in July Frinovsky and the Assistant Chief of Administration of the NKVD in the Far East Goglidze visited the border. They took with them fresh border troops not familiar



with local conditions, and gave them new maps on which several sectors actually controlled by the Japanese were marked as Soviet. They warned them to be especially vigilant and to be alert to the possibility of Japanese provocation.

On July 29 an incident occurred near Lake Khasan in one of the improperly marked sectors. Soviet border guards brought back a captured Japanese officer as proof that the border had been violated. Zaozernaia and Bezymiannaia Heights, where the capture took place, were considered by tacit agreement to be no one's. The Japanese drove the Soviet units out of the area and reinforced their own. Large-scale military hostilities began.

The Soviet troops' situation was complicated by a foolish order from Stalin. They were to fight but were to make sure that not one bullet landed in Japanese territory. Because of that they tried to regain the heights almost solely on the strength of bayonet charges. Blucher was a brave warrior, but of the old school. He trained his troops without any of the newfangled ideas. He would use artillery, for example, only against a broad front, not against reconnoitered fire points. Such tactics were already outmoded for the Red Army. When Soviet units charged, the Japanese fire points opened up at full strength. Soviet losses were heavy.

Finally, at the cost of large sacrifices, Soviet troops took the disputed heights. Military action was halted on August 11. The border was clearly demarcated and confirmed in a peaceful agreement. Wars of national liberation did not break out.<sup>6</sup>

During the conflict Blucher was not mentioned once in the press and a week after the battles ended he was recalled to Moscow. Voroshilov gave him a magnificent snow job and ordered him to take a vacation until a new appointment for him was decided on.

Blucher left with his wife and brother, commander of a large air force unit, for the Crimea (by other accounts to Sochi). At his leisure the old warrior thought a lot about the recent failure and finally decided he understood the true cause. According to his wife, he wrote a letter to Stalin early in October. "All that happened was the result of provocation. . . . I was thoroughly misinformed. . . . My boys walked right into the Japanese machine guns. . . . Frinovskiy and Goglidze should be removed from the Far East and punished. . . ." Blucher was soon ordered to Moscow, and on October 22 he was arrested.

They put the marshal in Lefortovo prison. The new Deputy People's



Commissar L. P. Beria took the first interrogation. The charges were serious: association with the Japanese since 1921, and intention to defect to them with the help of his brother, the pilot. Blucher denied everything.

His death occurred on November 9. By questioning witnesses the late V. V. Dushenkin, chief of the Central Archive of the Soviet Army, has established that Ezhov personally shot Blucher in his office. Sentence was pronounced over the body.

The examples offered above are only fragments of the gigantic effort to destroy the command staff of the RKKA. The information we have about dates of arrest—and even more of executions—are fragmentary and often contradictory. The total number of victims can only be guessed at. We will have to reconcile ourselves to describing the process only very incompletely.

The repression encompassed tens of thousands of officers (Red commanders). The distribution of victims by rank is included in the following chapter. Here we will try only to present the dynamics of personnel changes in higher positions: in the central apparatus of the Commissariat of Defense and in military district commands.

Massive arrests of military men were conducted from the spring of 1937 late into autumn 1938. The end of the arrests might be associated with the elimination of Blucher and the fall of Ezhov. In the following years although the repression of Red commanders did not entirely cease, it became individualized, isolated, one could even say insignificant in contrast to the bacchanalia of 1937–38.

The tables to be found in appendix IV show the devastation wrought in the leadership of the RKKA by the proletarian ax. We have not been able to fill in all the blanks, but the facts we have offered are reliable. Only those dates that have been checked against official sources have been included. None of those indicated as having perished in the repression died a natural death.

The following selective statistics give a particular picture of the quantitative side of the process. It concerns a small group of military men—deputy people's commissars and district commanders—but the dynamic picture of the repression in the Army as a whole was similar, only many times larger.

Before the June trial two deputy commissars and four commanders were killed; after the trial and before 1938, two and four more. In the first four months of 1938 the numbers were one and six; after that, one

and three. Altogether six deputy commissars and seventeen commanders of military districts and fleets were victims of the repression.

On January 1, 1937, there were seventeen military districts and fleets. Until that date only one of the victims (Shtern) had not occupied one of those posts. The command of military districts was entirely liquidated in two years. Of all the men in those two categories only two survived: Shaposhnikov and Budenny.

Those who were removed were replaced quite arbitrarily with others chosen simply because they were handy. It did not make much difference because most of the newly appointed commanders soon perished as well. Stalin cared little for individuals, except of course for himself, and that only because the country needed him so. The various screws of the huge government mechanism were interchangeable, each one like the other. If every cook can run the state, why not entrust the command of army corps and districts to the first fool or ignoramus to come along.

A few examples will demonstrate just how intelligently the cadres were selected. In June 1937 three brigade commanders were recalled from Spain, promoted, and appointed: N. N. Voronov to chief of artillery of the RKKA, Ia. V. Smushkevich to assistant chief of the air force (he assumed Proskurov's post after the latter's arrest but was shot in 1941), D. G. Pavlov to assistant chief of the Armor of Tank Administration (he was arrested in the first months of the war while he was serving as commander of the Western Front and shot in October of 1941).

Colonel A. M. Vasilevsky, who had attended the first course of the General Staff Academy, was appointed head of the department of rear studies in August 1937. Two months later he took over the department of operational preparations of the higher command staff in the General Staff. Further promotions followed rapidly: in 1939 he became assistant chief of the operations department; in 1940, assistant chief of the operations administration; in July 1941, assistant chief of General Staff. Thus a man who had never commanded larger units, who had no experience in headquarters work, and who had little education came to head the country's major military organization. It was enough that his promptness, lack of personality, and industriousness pleased Stalin, who himself was an absolute ignoramus in military matters.

In 1939-40 we meet P. V. Rychagov and I. I. Proskurov, both lieutenants in 1937, as lieutenants general serving as deputy commis-

sars of aviation. Both were shot, Proskurov in 1940, and Rychagov in 1941.

There were more amazing flights. Captain Peresyppkin from commander of a communications squadron two years later became People's Commissar of Communications of the USSR and from the first days of the war also chief of communications of the Red Army.

Vasilevsky's classmates N. F. Vatutin, M. V. Zakharov, and A. I. Antonov—none of whom had the education or experience for the jobs—became chiefs of staff of the most important regions in Kiev, Leningrad, and Moscow. Fortunately, unlike Vasilevsky, they were able, especially Zakharov and Antonov, to quickly achieve the level of competence demanded by their positions.

Not everyone succeeded. It was their misfortune and not their fault, but they often paid dearly for it, they and the country. The commander of the Western Special Military District D. G. Pavlov went in three peacetime years from a brigade commander to general of the Army. He was practically the only one of the commanders who literally obeyed the suicidal prewar orders of Stalin, Timoshenko, and Zhukov. Because of that the Western region proved the least well-defended when Germany attacked. Pavlov lost control of his troops in the first hours of the war and doomed them to almost complete destruction. He was simply unable to take any positive action. For that he was declared a traitor and shot.

Other commanders of border regions—F. I. Kuznetsov (Baltic), Ia. T. Cherevichenko (Odessa), M. M. Popov (Leningrad)—did not share Pavlov's fate, but neither did they achieve particular success. M. P. Kirponos, commander of the Kiev Special Region, is better known. In 1940 he had been commandant of the Kazan infantry school and had begged to be sent to the Finnish Front. The colonel got his wish and was given a division. During the war he became a major general. Kirponos's division was the first to get into Vyborg. A month later he was made lieutenant general and commander of the Leningrad Military District, and half a year later he was colonel general and commander of the Kiev district. Entering his office he drew his hand across his throat and said, "A division was as much I could handle." Kirponos was an honest and courageous soldier, but was not able to save his troops from defeat or his native Ukraine from capture. It is possible that his death in battle saved him from repression.

In Marshal S. S. Biriuzov's memoirs there is an interesting descrip-

tion that well illustrates the situation in the Army after the slaughter of the command staff. After he graduated from the Academy he was sent as chief of staff to the glorious 30th Irkutsk Rifle Division. When he arrived at his assignment, he went directly to headquarters. A senior lieutenant was sitting in the chief's office. Biriuzov assumed he was an adjutant and asked where the chief-of-staff was. The answer was, "I am the chief-of-staff." The young officer was very glad to see Biriuzov's orders. "Go see the division commander, comrade colonel, we are utterly exhausted here." In the division commander's office sat another senior lieutenant. It turned out that all the senior officers of the division had been arrested. Command according to combat orders had been taken by company commanders and heads of headquarters departments.



All these people were apparently immune and impervious to the simplest sense of compassion only because they served. They, as serving people, were impervious to the feeling of humanity as paved earth is to rain. . . . It may be that these governors, superintendents, policemen, are necessary, but it is terrible to see people deprived of their chief human quality, of love and pity for their fellow men. . . . Indeed, they are terrible people, more terrible than robbers. A robber may have pity, these never can; they are ensured against pity as these stones are against vegetation. —Lev Tolstoy, *Resurrection*

When people want to kill a dog, they say it is rabid. —Popular saying

It is naive to moralize to people who do not acknowledge human morality.  
—Stalin

Probably you don't shudder  
killing a person.  
Oh, martyrs of dogma,  
You, too, are victims of the times.  
—Pasternak

It is still hard today to determine with any precision what Stalin's and Ezhov's whole plan was for the destruction of the Army leadership. There is no doubt that there was such a plan. Who in the USSR works without a plan?

It would be easy to say that there were several plans, that they changed, became intertwined, and were coordinated; or on the other hand that they came into conflict. That is not so important. What is important is that from the summer of 1936 there was a widespread, deeply conspiratorial plot against the Red Army, against its leadership.

### **The Original Conception**

The basic plan, which did not exclude variations held in reserve, lay in the mainstream of Stalinist policy. The enemies of the people had their

own military organization or, worse still, close association with conspirators in the Army. Such an assumption led logically to a show trial of military officers, most likely together with civilian oppositionists.

The plan was not so foolish, but it was destroyed when it came up against a powerful obstacle. For the trial to succeed it needed prominent military officers who would agree to take upon themselves the roles of traitors to their country, conspirators, and accomplices of enemies internal and foreign. As bad luck would have it, the NKVD, hard as they tried, could not find suitable candidates. In 1936 and 1937, as later, the officers—with very few exceptions—refused to cooperate with the prosecution.

Failure haunted the NKVD and the Procuracy from the very beginning. Dmitri Shmidt, who was chosen to get the process started, behaved miserably, unconscionably, not like a Bolshevik. At first glance he would seem to have been a good choice. His Trotskyite past permitted the prosecution to tie him in with the civilian enemies of the people, as they did in Mrachkovsky's testimony in August 1936.

It remained only to associate him with the criminal activities of the prominent commanders with whom he had been close since the Civil War. That made it possible to implicate, for example, Primakov, Eideman, Dubovoi, and less directly Yakir. If association with the opposition was easy to show—and here Shmidt was the object at whom others pointed their fingers—his relations with the military officers proved just the opposite. Shmidt was supposed to give testimony that would serve as the basis for bringing charges against his comrades-in-arms.

The NKVD investigators understood that it would be difficult to get an admission of guilt from Shmidt. Therefore they charged him at first only with the intention, together with Kuzmichev, to kill Voroshilov. Very likely Shmidt had little use for Voroshilov, who was a zealous Stalinist, and the investigator, playing on this hostility, implied the possibility of such intentions. Together with torture, similar psychological treatment often bore fruit. If they could get Shmidt to crack on that point, they would drag him further, force him to admit to a widespread conspiracy in the military. They would have suggested to him that once he had admitted to the one part, he would have to admit the rest. The intention to kill the People's Commissar was sufficient cause to sentence him to death, and he could lighten his penalty by naming his conspirators, the ringleaders, etc.

Nothing came of the NKVD's good idea. Tortured practically to death, Shmidt did not give in. If in moments of extreme torment he admitted to anything, when he came to himself he denied his testimony. But it probably wasn't even that. While Yakir was in the Lubianka, he was never shown copies of Shmidt's confessions, only told of them, just as Voroshilov only told of his subsequent retractions.

Shmidt stood firm. The plan for an open trial was destroyed. Putna was also in the Lubianka. There is some information that he was also tortured, but again unsuccessfully. They saved Putna for the June trial, which was carried out in secret. Shmidt apparently looked too bad to present him even at that closed spectacle for invited guests. He was shot almost on the eve of the trial, on May 20, 1937.

The scenario for an open trial still existed; at least it had been thoroughly worked out. Vyshinsky, the chief playwright, regretted the lost inspiration, and he determined to get something out of it. Large parts of the inspiration went into another show, the Bukharin trial of 1938. Two considerations support the idea that the "military episodes" were not written especially for the event but were taken from old plans: (1) the criminal association of Bukharin, Rykov, Iagoda, Krestinsky, and Grinko with the military added nothing to the criminal visage of the accused; they are completely absent from the prosecution's conclusion and are not at all used in the procurator's speech; (2) Yakir is barely mentioned in the inserted episodes (instead Gamarnik is active in the Ukraine), which is natural since he was added to the list at the last moment.

These are valuable to us as the only charges publicly laid against the Tukhachevsky group, if only after the fact. We include them here in their entirety, preserving the chronology of the trial session.<sup>1</sup>

*Evening session, March 2; Examination of G. F. Grinko*

GRINKO: First, the association with the right-Trotsky center. My association went along this line—Gamarnik, Piatakov, Rykov. I was connected with Gamarnik through Liubchenko, who was also associated with Yakir and Gamarnik. Through Gamarnik I had connections with Piatakov, and later with Rykov. I carried out foreign policy tasks because Piatakov and Gamarnik had told me that Trotsky had agreed to pay compensation at the expense of the Ukraine for military assistance in our struggle against Soviet

authority. . . . My association with Gamarnik, Piatakov, and Rykov began approximately late in 1935. . . .

On the basis of a number of conversations and associations, and tasks assigned me by Rykov, Bukharin, Gamarnik, Rozengolts, Yakovlev, Antipov, Rudzutak, Yagoda, Vareikis, and a large number of other people, it became clear to me that the right-Trotskyite center was relying mainly at that time on military assistance from aggressors. . . . In addition to that the right-Trotskyite center had an alternative plan to seize the Kremlin . . . .

In that period terrorism was one of the main weapons in the common arsenal of the struggle against Soviet power.

VYSHINKSY: From whom did you learn this?

G: From Rykov, Yakovlev, Gamarnik, and Piatakov. . . .

V: Grinko, where did this terroristic line come from?

G: From Trotsky. I learned about that from Gamarnik . . . the question was also directly raised about the removal of Ezhov as a man especially dangerous for the conspirators.

V: What does removal mean?

G: Removal—that means murder. . . . I heard from Gamarnik that Yakir and Gamarnik ordered the Trotskyite Ozeriansky, who then worked in the People's Commissariat of Finance, to prepare a terrorist act against Ezhov. . . .<sup>2</sup>

A second fact that I know . . . was the preparation of a terrorist act against Stalin by Bergavinov from the Main Administration of the Northern Sea Route. I found that out also from Gamarnik. . . . I heard it also from Bergavinov himself, who told me he had accepted Gamarnik's assignment and was trying to carry it out.

There was nothing more to drag out of Grinko, so Vyshinsky plugged in Rykov:

V: Grinko just spoke of the group of military traitors—Tukhachevsky and others who in their turn were convicted by the Supreme Court. Do you corroborate that part of the testimony which concerns you?

RYKOV: I knew of Tukhachevsky's military group. . . . That military group was organized independently of the bloc or of any tinge of Trotskyite or Bukharinites. The military group had as its goal the violent elimination of the government of the Union, and in



particular participated in planning the Kremlin revolution. . . . I learned about that from Tomsy in 1934.

*Evening session of March 3; Examination of N. N. Krestinsky<sup>3</sup>*

VYSHINSKY: Accused Krestinsky, tell us, please, what do you know about the participation of the Tukhachevsky group in the "right-Trotskyite bloc?"

KRESTINSKY: About Tukhachevsky's participation I know the following. When I met with Trotsky at Meran in October 1933, he indicated to me that in planning a state revolution we must not rely solely on our Trotskyite forces, because they were insufficient for that, but must strike a deal with the rights and with the military group. He paid particular attention to Tukhachevsky as an adventurer, ambitious to hold the highest position in the Army,<sup>4</sup> who would likely be willing to risk much. He asked me to tell Piatakov about this and to discuss it with Tukhachevsky personally.

V: Did you talk with Tukhachevsky?

K: I talked with him early in 1934 after Piatakov had spoken with him. I told him of my conversation with Trotsky. Tukhachevsky said that in principle he agreed not only with the idea of joining forces but also with the goal before us. . . . I subsequently spoke with Tukhachevsky about these things several more times. That was in the second half of 1935, in 1936, and 1937. . . . During one of these conversations in 1935 he named several men on whom he relied. He named Yakir, Uborevich, Kork, and Eideman. Later in another conversation, a very important conversation, which took place at the Extraordinary Eighth Congress of Soviets, Tukhachevsky urged upon me the need to hasten the revolution. The problem was that we had associated the revolution with our defeatist orientation and had timed it to coincide with the beginning of war, with the attack by Germany on the Soviet Union. Inasmuch as the attack was delayed, so was the practical realization of the revolution. The gradual destruction of counterrevolutionary forces was beginning at the time. Piatakov and Radek had been arrested; the Trotskyites were beginning to be arrested; and Tukhachevsky began to fear that if things were put off they might fall through altogether. Therefore he posed the question of accelerating the counterrevolutionary attack. . . .

V: Accused Rozengolts, do you corroborate this part of Krestinsky's testimony?

ROZENGOLOTS: Yes, I corroborate it.

V: Did you speak with Tukhachevsky and with Krestinsky?

R: I had a talk with Krestinsky at the end of May 1937 about accelerating the organization of the revolution. . . .

*Evening session of March 4; Examination of A. P. Rozengolts<sup>5</sup>*

V: Did Rykov tell you that Tukhachevsky was promising to act, but did not act?

R: Yes.

V: Who else told you?

R: Krestinsky told me about it, and Sedov transmitted Trotsky's opinion. . . .

V: Accused Krestinsky, tell us, did you tell Rozengolts in 1936 that Tukhachevsky was procrastinating with the counterrevolutionary action? . . .

KRESTINSKY: Yes. Late in 1936 the question was raised at the same time by Trotsky from abroad in a letter to Rykov and by Tukhachevsky about hastening the revolution and not be timed to coincide with the outbreak of war. . . .

V: That means that Tukhachevsky was in a hurry?

K: By the end of 1936 Tukhachevsky began to hurry.

V: And at that time did you push him on?

K: I agreed with him. . . .

R: The point at which I stopped was the meeting which we had with Tukhachevsky.

V: Where was that meeting?

R: At my apartment.

V: You had a meeting, with whom?

R: With Tukhachevsky and Krestinsky. . . . That was in late March 1937. At that meeting Tukhachevsky informed us that he could count with certainty on the possibility of revolution and indicated the timing, that before May 15, in the first half of May, he could accomplish the military revolution.

V: Of what did that counterrevolutionary act consist?

R: Tukhachevsky had a number of alternatives. One of the alternatives, the one on which he counted most, was the chance for a

group of his military supporters to gather at his apartment, to get into the Kremlin under pretext, seize the Kremlin telephone exchange and kill the leaders of the Party and government. . . .

K: We spoke with Rozengolts and Gamarnik about this. We discussed the necessity of terrorist acts against the leaders of the Party and government.

V: Against whom specifically?

K: We had Stalin, Molotov, and Kaganovich in mind. . . . Ever since November 1936 I was decidedly in favor of speeding up that revolution as much as possible. There was no need to push Tukhachevsky as he had the same feeling, and he himself put that question to us—the rights—to me, to Rozengolts and Rudzutak. . . . Our feelings on the question of revolution coincided. . . .

V: (to Rozengolts). What do you have to say about your meetings with Gamarnik?

R: I confirm the testimony I gave during the preliminary investigation.

V: What was that?

R: Concerning Gamarnik the most important point was that Gamarnik told us about his proposal, with which Tukhachevsky apparently concurred, about the possibility of seizing the building of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs during the military revolution. Gamarnik further assumed that this attack would be carried out by some military unit directly under his command, assuming that he had sufficient party and political prestige in the military units. He expected that several commanders, especially the most valiant, would help him. I recall that he mentioned Gorbachev's name.<sup>6</sup>

V: That means that not only did Tukhachevsky inform you of the plan of his criminal conspiracy, but Gamarnik also informed you of the plan?

R: Yes. . . .

### *Second examination of N. I. Krestinsky*

KRESTINSKY: [Krestinsky narrated the contents of a conversation that allegedly took place between him and Trotsky on October 10, 1933] The first thing was an agreement with foreign governments. The second was the establishment in the Soviet Union of a combined force of Trotskyites, rights, and military conspirators. . . .

As far as the military men are concerned, when Trotsky spoke of them he mentioned only one name, that of Tukhachevsky, as a man like Bonaparte, an adventurer, an ambitious man who strove to play not only a military, but a politico-military role and who would undoubtedly cooperate with us. . . . He asked me to inform Piatakov about these policies and especially about the need to communicate with the Japanese. In addition he asked that I just not have Matakov speak with Tukhachevsky and Rudzutak, but that I meet with them as well. . . . When I returned I immediately informed Piatakov and Rozengolts of my talks. Piatakov spoke with Tukhachevsky and Rudzutak. . . .

In February 1934 I met with Tukhachevsky and with Rudzutak and told them of my conversation. I got from both confirmation in principle of their acceptance of the idea of cooperation with foreign governments, of their military assistance, the defeatist line, and the establishment of a united organization within the country. . . .

Concerning the timing of the act: From the time of my meeting in Meran it was considered indisputably decided that the act would coincide with the start of war, and that therefore we in the Union could not set the date for Tukhachevsky's action. . . . Late in November 1936 at the Extraordinary Eighth Congress of Soviets, Tukhachevsky spoke with me excitedly and in grave terms. He said things had begun to fall apart. It was obvious that there would be more repressions of Trotskyists and rights. . . . He drew the conclusions: we could not wait for interventionists; we would have to act ourselves. . . . Tukhachevsky spoke not only for himself, but also in the name of the counterrevolutionary military organization. . . . It turned out that Trotsky on his own initiative had decided the act should be moved up and sent an order to that effect in a letter to Rozengolts. . . . After receiving that reply, we began to make more concentrated preparations for the act. Approximately in the beginning of February [1937] Rozengolts and I were officially made members of the center. In November [1936] Rozengolts, Gamarnik, and I had to take over the leadership of the Trotskyites. Piatakov was already gone. So was Radek. . . . A date was set for the revolution—the second half of May. But at the very beginning of May it was learned that Tukhachevsky was not going to London. . . . He declared that he could accomplish the act in the first half of May.



*Morning session of March 7; Examination of N. I. Bukharin*

BUKHARIN: In that period [1929–30] we had already discussed the question of overthrowing the Soviet government by violent means with the help of a group of military participants in the conspiracy.

VYSHINSKY: Tukhachevsky, Primakov, and several others?

B: Exactly correct. . . . The forces of the conspiracy were the forces of Enukidze plus Yagoda. . . . At the time [1933–34] Enukidze had managed to recruit, as best I remember, the former military commandant of the Kremlin, Peterson, who by the way had been commandant of Trotsky's train. Then there was the military organization of conspirators: Tukhachevsky, Kork, and others.

That was all. The literary exercises of academician Vyshinsky need no comment. We are left only to marvel at how simply the frightening news of widespread treachery in the Army command was presented to the people.

**The Red Folder**

A myth about the destruction of the leadership of the RKKA begun by Khrushchev has taken root in Soviet propaganda: that it was the result of an evil plot by the Germans who slipped Stalin false documents about Tukhachevsky's association with the German general staff. That version saves face for Stalin and the system, but only people like Lev Nikulin<sup>7</sup> could possibly believe it.

The only truth to it is that there was a collection of documents, which is usually called "the red folder." It was prepared in Germany, and it did fall into Stalin's hands. The rest accords less well with the truth.

The essential question is, who fabricated the folder? All sources—and there are many—although they do not agree in all details, do agree on one thing: the papers were made to order for someone in Moscow. It was the NKVD acting, most probably, on orders from Stalin. That can be considered certain today. Remaining details give the matter entertainment value as a mystery, but they do not change its ominous significance.

The history of the "red folder" is in itself fascinating. We will try to

summarize all that has become known. Everything is not clearly known; the details are not complete, which is natural when one has to speak of the activities of the secret services.

At the center of this story stands the Russian general Nikolai Vladimirovich Skoblin (1893–?). In November 1918 the twenty-five-year-old Captain Skoblin became commander of the illustrious Kornilov division of Whites and remained in that post in emigration. General Skoblin was a prominent figure in the White émigré military organization, the Russian All-Military Union (*Russkii Obshche-Voinskii Soiuz* —ROVS).

Skoblin's biography remains incomplete. He disappeared from Paris at dawn on September 23, 1937, only hours after the kidnapping of the head of ROVS, General Miller, by agents of the NKVD. Even then, however, it was clear that Skoblin played a central role in that act. As early as 1930 he had been involved in the kidnapping of the ROVS' first leader, General A. P. Kutepov.

Most likely Skoblin had been recruited by the NKVD through his wife, the famous Russian singer Nadezhda Plevitskaia.<sup>8</sup> Plevitskaia's superior in the NKVD was the legendary Naum Ettingon. Her contact and bagman was Ettingon's brother Mark.<sup>9</sup>

Although, as we have already said, recollections about the "red folder" are many, they can be divided into two finished versions. The first is told by Victor Aleksandrov,<sup>10</sup> the second by Robert Conquest.<sup>11</sup>

Strictly speaking, these two versions do not contradict each other in any important way. Aleksandrov's description is much longer, a whole book of almost two hundred pages, which reads like fiction. He tries to reconstruct long dialogues between the dramatis personae: Stalin with Radek, Stalin with Voroshilov, Radek with Nikolai, Feldman with Tukhachevsky, Skoblin with Heydrich, and many others. Conquest devoted all of four pages to this affair. His sources are far fewer, but they are perhaps more reliable.<sup>12</sup>

It should be said that both authors give only an incomplete picture and leave several important circumstances unclear.<sup>13</sup>

*Aleksandrov's Version.* Stalin sent K. Radek on a secret mission to establish contact with the Germans with the aim of further close cooperation. Radek met with Colonel Nikolai in the Polish Baltic town Oliwa near Sopot. After that Ezhov ordered Yagoda to arrest Radek on the grounds that he had had talks with Colonel Nikolai as an agent of the Trotskyite opposition.<sup>14</sup> This is the

most difficult part of Aleksandrov's version to verify.<sup>15</sup>

After Ezhov replaced Yagoda he sent to Paris the deputy director of the foreign department of the NKVD, Aleksander Spigelglass and a certain Sarovsky.<sup>16</sup> This was part of Ezhov's plan to begin discrediting Tukhachevsky as a German agent. Spigelglass ordered Skoblin to inform the Czechs (through their resident in Geneva, Nemanov) that the Trotskyites had established contact with the Germans through Radek and Piatakov. Skoblin was to deliver to Nemanov Radek's statement that he (Radek) had agreed to organize a military coup d'état with Tukhachevsky and Putna. In exchange for that favor Skoblin was promised that the NKVD would remove General Miller, which would make it possible for him (Skoblin) to become head of the ROVS.

But Skoblin was not only a paid agent of the NKVD. He also hated the Soviet regime. He dreamed of its destruction and placed his main hope on Hitler. Skoblin worked on the Germans also: he had close ties to R. Heydrich, the head of the SD. Skoblin figured that he had to go further than the NKVD's instructions. If it were possible to prepare documents about Tukhachevsky's association with the Germans and make these available to Stalin, the latter would be sure to destroy the top leadership of the Red Army, and then Hitler would not be able to withstand the temptation to attack the weakened Soviet Union. Skoblin decided that this plan would find an ally in Heydrich, who was opposed to Nikolai's efforts to bring Berlin and Moscow closer, and who, more than that, knew that Tukhachevsky saw in Nazi Germany the main threat to the USSR.

Heydrich accepted Skoblin's idea to reinforce the information sent to Beneš with documentary proof.<sup>17</sup> He found support from his superior Himmler and from a specialist in Russian affairs, Rosenberg. It remained only to secure the approval of Hitler and Hess. The decisive meeting took place on Christmas Eve 1936 in Hitler's office. The matter was kept in strict secrecy even from the high military command. Besides Hitler, Rosenberg, Hess, and Heydrich, only a few high officials of the SD and the Gestapo, including V. Hoettl<sup>18</sup> and Herman Berens,<sup>19</sup> attended. Technical implementation of the operation was entrusted to Colonel Naujocks.<sup>20</sup>

Work went ahead full speed from the first days of 1937. Tukhachevsky was in Germany six times, not including his captivity. From all of these trips there remained authentic documents in his hand. They were used in preparing the forgeries. Citing ss General Schellenberg, Aleksandrov



offers an interesting detail. Tukhachevsky's original letters had been gathered for the most part by military intelligence. Its head, Admiral Canaris, did not want to give them to Heydrich. At that point M. Borman, with the help of several professional thieves, organized a burglary of the Nachrichtendienst archives.

After that a special team of forgers set to work. It included a Russian émigré counterfeiter convicted of forging English pounds. Skoblin traveled periodically to Berlin. He was the chief expert in evaluating the finished documents.

Ezhov waited impatiently for the work on the dossier to be completed.<sup>21</sup> He promised Stalin that he would put proof of Tukhachevsky's conspiracy on his desk by the end of March 1937. When it became clear that the work would not be done by the appointed date, he sent an emissary to Skoblin to get something he could show to Stalin. Skoblin went to Berlin and got from the Germans a list of the documents making up the dossier.

Finally in mid-April all was ready. Ezhov's deputy Zakovsky arrived in Berlin. He offered to pay the Germans 200,000 marks (in rubles) for the dossier. Berens considered the sum far too high. Zakovsky insisted. He said that no one in the Politburo would believe that such important documents could be bought for less; besides that, he needed a formal receipt for the money. Finally the deal was consummated.<sup>22</sup>

*Conquest's Version.* This is shorter and drier. The NKVD informed Heydrich through Skoblin of Tukhachevsky's secret association with the German General Staff. The security services, understanding that the source of that information was in Moscow, decided nonetheless to make use of it, first of all to compromise the General Staff with whom the SD had strained relations. It soon became clear, however, that they had a good opportunity of another sort in their hands.

Rumors of Tukhachevsky's German ties were spread by way of Czech president Beneš in the last months of 1936. In March or April 1937 Heydrich and Berens ordered their subordinates to prepare "documentary evidence." That delicate work was carried out by an engraver, Franz Putzig, a specialist in counterfeit documents. The dossier comprised thirty-two pages. According to Colonel Naujocks, there was a "letter" in the dossier signed by Tukhachevsky and stamped "top secret." The letter mimicked Tukhachevsky's style. The marshal's signature was taken from the Soviet-German agreement of 1926 about technical cooperation in the field of aviation. Signatures of German



generals on other letters were copied from their bank checks.

German security services transmitted these documents to the NKVD. The NKVD, it would seem, sneaked the dossier to the Czechs "to create the impression in Stalin (to whom Beneš sent them) that he, Stalin, received them from friendly foreign hands. . . ." One way or another, by the beginning of May the dossier was in Stalin's hands.

Such, in brief, is the history of the "red folder." Despite some disagreement about some details, we can consider as established fact: (1) the Germans fabricated documents slandering Tukhachevsky at the behest of Skoblin, who acted with the knowledge of or according to instructions from the NKVD; (2) when Ezhov got the documents in one way or another, he was aware they were forgeries.

Stalin's role remains incompletely explained. It is entirely possible that the initiative in the affair was not his, but the NKVD's. History knows of many instances of such institutions acting independently. The tsarist Okhrana, to pick a homegrown example, was involved in the murder of a Russian prime minister, Stolypin. Stalin might have been fooled for a while, but that does not diminish his responsibility. If his favorite child had fooled him, it had acted entirely in his spirit.

### The June 11 Affair

In early May 1937 the "red folder" lay on Stalin's desk. It seemed to be just what he wanted. In May preparations for the trial were sped up. On the eleventh the shake-up of the generals was announced. Tukhachevsky resigned from his duties as Deputy People's Commissar and went off to command the remote Volga district. Yakir was transferred from the Kiev district, which he had headed for twelve years, to Leningrad. His responsibilities were almost the same, with the important difference that in moving to Leningrad he automatically lost his important position as a member of the Ukrainian Politburo. At the same time Egorov, while he remained Deputy People's Commissar, gave up his post as commander of the General Staff. He was replaced by Troop Commander of the Leningrad Military District Shaposhnikov. It was then that the restoration of the military commissars was announced.<sup>23</sup>

Two of the personnel changes were especially important: those of Tukhachevsky and Yakir. For some time, however, both stayed where they were. On May 23 Yakir even spoke at the Party conference of the

Kiev district. Tukhachevsky arrived in Samara only on May 26 and was arrested that same day in the regional Party committee building, where he had been summoned by P. P. Postyshev.

It is hard to explain why Stalin gave such a reprieve to the two main figures of the upcoming trial. All the more since Kork (May 11), Eideman (May 24), and Feldman (May 24 or 25) had been arrested before Tukhachevsky left Moscow.

Uborevich's turn came on May 30, and Yakir was seized on the thirty-first, the same day Gamarnik shot himself. The date of Primakov's arrest is still uncertain.<sup>24</sup>

The reestablishment of the commissars' power was a vital measure that betrayed the evil seriousness of Stalin's intentions. Since the Civil War, commissars had occupied key positions in the Army hierarchy. Without the commissar's signature (as a member of the RVS) none of the commanders' or commanding officers' orders had the force of law. This restriction was originally caused by the lack of trust of commanders, especially those in the highest ranks, who frequently did not have proletarian backgrounds.

Unity of command was established in the RKKA in 1934. The Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR (the board of the People's Commissariat of Army and Naval Affairs) was liquidated, as were the RVSS of districts, armies, fleets, etc. The military department received a new name, the People's Commissariat of Defense (NKO). From the statute on the NKO, which was confirmed by the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR on November 22, 1934, we read, in part: "1. At the head of the NKO stands the People's Commissar of Defense. He also stands at the head of the RKKA. . . . 6. Under the People's Commissar is the Military Council, which is a consultative body. . . ."

Commissars became assistants to the corresponding military commanders for political affairs. There were no consultative organs at lower levels.

The decree of the TSIK and SNK of May 10, 1937, signified a sharp turn of the wheel. From regimental level on up, commissars were restored to their former powers. Despite the fact that the law on military commissars was to go into force only on August 15, on that very day, May 10, military councils that were executive rather than consultative were formed in regions, armies, and fleets. The Law on Regional Military Councils, confirmed May 16, 1937, read in part:

1. At the head of a Military District stands the Military Council comprised of the commander of troops and two members.
2. The commander chairs meetings of the Military Council.
3. The Military Council is the highest representative of military authority in the region. All military units and institutions located in the territory of the region are subordinate to the Military Council. . . .
- . . . .
5. The Military Council is subordinated directly to the People's Commissar of Defense. . . .
- . . . .
7. All orders for the region will be signed by the commander of troops, one of the members of the Military Council, and the chief-of-staff.

Regional commanders, who were about to be liquidated, were stripped of command of the troops entrusted to them. It was symptomatic that the new order did not affect the People's Commissar, Stalin's apprentice, Voroshilov. The Military Council under him retained its consultative status. It was as if a state of emergency had been declared in the Army.

Now, at least in theory, any commander could be held in check by assigning to him reliable members of the Military Council. True, the political workers were pretty well soiled by Gamarnik's hostile activities and they would soon suffer purges and shake-ups; but the Stalinists never were squeamish about that sort of work.

Stalin had just about everything he needed for the trial by this time, except the sanction of some higher organ. We are not, of course, talking about observing constitutional guarantees. It was simply that Stalin did not want to take upon himself sole responsibility for such a decision. He could without difficulty have gotten the approval of the powerless TSK headed by kindly Kalinin. Molotov stood ready to arm the SNK's resolution. Tukhachevsky's arrest had been approved in a written interrogatory of the members of the TSK, including Yakir. All this was not enough for Stalin.

Calling a plenum of the TSK entailed a certain risk: the memory of the problem at the February meeting was still fresh. But that was not the only problem. The general Secretary could in the end force the Party to make the right decision. He could say to them, "Remember, I told you of the great damage done by a few spies ensconced somewhere

in Army headquarters. Now these people have been unmasked and seized." That could leave an unpleasant aftertaste, however. "Someone could say," Stalin calculated, "that the Party had judged the Army. Is that correct from the political point of view? No, it is politically wrong." Stalin decided to let the military have the last word. **LET THE ARMY JUDGE THE ARMY.**

On June 1 the People's Commissar of Defense summoned the Military Council. That consultative organ included the top Army brass: the deputy people's commissar, department heads of the Commissariat, regional commanders-in-chief, commandants of academies; altogether eighty people. Official reports of that session of the council are very skimpy. It was only on June 14, after the trial was over and the executions carried out, that newspapers published Voroshilov's order: "From June 1 to 4 the Military Council of the People's Commissariat of Defense met in the presence of members of the Government. They heard my report on the discovery by the NKVD of a treacherous, counterrevolutionary, fascist organization. . . ." As a matter of fact, there was no more interesting information in the order, only name-calling and curses. It was not even said what decision had been taken or if one had been taken. Members of the council were almost all liquidated. One of those remaining alive has told us what happened at those historical meetings.

Those present were stunned; no, they were utterly dispirited. Voroshilov's speech, of course, convinced no one. There was a feeling of impending catastrophe. They waited for Stalin.

Before the Great Leader appeared, the audience was properly demoralized. Stalin hurled thunder and lightning. The guilt of the eight prisoners, and also of "Gamarnik, absent from the trial," was fully proven. They were monsters of the human race, traitors, accomplices of the fascists, spies. They were proven guilty also by the testimony of their accomplices: Army Commander Sediakin, Commandant of the Academy of the General Staff Kuchinsky, Chief of the Administration of Institutions of Higher Learning Slavin. No facts were presented, no documents were offered, but no one dared ask about those things.

Members of the council sat around a long table. Stalin walked around it. From time to time he stopped behind one of them, and that person would shrink into his chair and hang his head. It was shameful and frightening.

In the silence of the hall Stalin saw his victory. He tried to make



more of it. Continuing to walk around the table, he suddenly hesitated and struck up a conversation. Here he met with a setback—minor and personal, but perceptible.

At first everything went well. Stalin turned to Blucher, “Tell me Blucher, Aronshtam<sup>25</sup> says that nothing interests you except what women have between their legs. . . .” The marshal, who had a reputation in the RKKA as a lady-killer, exploded, “The old goat. He maligns me just because he can’t get it up any more.” Blucher realized that he was easily provoked and said no more. Stalin, satisfied, moved on. Standing near Budenny he said, “Here sits Semen Mikhailovich, a real proletarian commander; and these turds say he can only handle a cavalry squadron.” The flattered cavalier uttered a few choice curses at the “turds.” Then it was the turn of Ivan Naumovich Dubovoi, an old friend and long-time comrade of Yakir: “Tell me, Dubovoi, is it true what your buddy Yakir says, that you are incompetent to command troops?” Dubovoi shot back, “I don’t believe this. We still have to examine what Yakir is guilty of.” “What, you don’t believe this?” said Stalin, using the familiar form of address in his excitement. He had to give up trying to feel out the future judges. (There is some evidence that all three of the men questioned were already included in the Special Board of the Military College.) On his way out of the hall Dubovoi was arrested.

Nonetheless, Stalin had reason to be satisfied. The generals had not rebelled. They had not demanded real proof and had seemed satisfied with what had been said. The external decencies had been observed: the Red Army commanders would not be tried by civilians or the NKVD, but by their brothers—by the military.

Stalin did not flatter himself with what he had accomplished. Dubovoi’s prank had shown that not everyone could be convinced, deceived, or frightened, that there were a few who still kept their own council, who would doubt, feel disgust, hate, and maybe eventually act. Above all else Stalin feared a counterconspiracy and retaliatory acts.

It can be assumed that Stalin and Ezhov did not find it easy to decide just how to destroy Tukhachevsky’s group. Indeed, at first they rushed ahead, and then, suddenly, paused. On May 31 the last of the accused was arrested. The next day the Military Council met. Haste. But then for some reason it met for four days. And from there the situation got worse; a whole week passed before the trial. Such delay could certainly have fateful consequences.

If Stalin seriously feared a hostile reaction from some of the generals, the best thing to do would be to wrap up the whole affair quickly and all at once. Otherwise the displeasure aroused by the arrest of Tukhachevsky, Yakir, and others might ripen. That whole week the commanders-in-chief were not permitted out of Moscow to return to their troops. The purpose of the isolation is understandable. But another danger was lurking, not less dangerous than the first.

After all, all the leaders of the Red Army were together. However many spies there might be among them, they still had the chance to come to an agreement, to join together against their common enemy, the Stalin-Ezhov gang. They still had communications with the troops. With what could Stalin oppose the might of the million-man *РККА*? Nothing. Of course, the *НКВД* was watching in Moscow and in the provinces, but the threat was great and real.

The week's delay is an historic fact. How can it be explained? Most likely, Stalin did not have a clearly thought-through plan. There were so many agonizing, fateful questions to be decided.

The first unanswered question was Hamlet's: would there be a trial at all? It was still not too late to turn back from an enterprise that entailed fatal risk. If they challenged him on this, he would not get away with quotations and theses about escalating the class war. Destruction of the leadership of the Army was clearly treason. Bridges were not yet burned; the press had not yet been notified. The arrest of the Red generals could easily be announced as the intrigues of the enemy, the bloody fool Ezhov could be offered as a scapegoat and the whole venture passed over without excessive publicity. There was no certainty that the Army would not act. If the Army bestirred itself, Stalin could hope for intercession only from God, who had been repealed, or from the blue-caps.<sup>26</sup> But the temptation and the need to remove the Army leadership were too great. Stalin risked it. He counted on the passivity and indecisiveness of the victims. It is sad, but such assumptions of tyrants are often justified.

To decide to go ahead with the trial still does not presuppose a precise program. One thing was clear from the start: an open court could not be used in this case. This was a great misfortune, but from the very beginning the illustrious commanders behaved badly. From the political point of view as well as from the educational, it was not possible to drag such inveterate miscreants before the public. There would be no openhearted repentance. These were lost, hopeless people,

and comrades Stalin, Ezhov, and Vyshinsky had given up on them. They did not even bother to torture them in view of the uselessness and risk of such measures. After all Tukhachevsky and his comrades-in-arms had to be presented to the military judges if only at a closed session of the Special Board of the Military College of the Supreme Court of the USSR. Marks of torture or revelations about its use might anger the judges, sharpen their unavoidable moral dilemma. It might also have repercussions in military circles, which Stalin did not want.

All right, torture was unnecessary and Stalin would do without an open trial, but that was not yet the end of the disappointments. Of what, specifically, were these scoundrels, lowlifes, traitors, and double-dealers guilty? The question seems an idle one, but its answer determined the course pursued by the prosecution. Of course, as Kafka had one of his heroes say, guilt is always proven. Nonetheless, court procedure requires an indictment and proof—or their surrogates.

The reader would be right to wonder about our questions. Wasn't the "red folder" sufficient accusatory material? And why was such an effort made to obtain it? At this point the most telling, and outrageous, point of the whole matter surfaces. Stalin had nothing with which to charge the accused. It was a lot easier to invent the *corpus delicti* than to bring charges against them.

God knows we do not mean to seek out paradoxes. It is known for certain that the "red folder" did not appear in the Military Council or at the trial of June 11. That fact only initially seems to lead us into a blind alley, and knowing it makes the circumstances under which the "folder" was ordered seem meaningless and inessential. Whether Ezhov acted on his own or on Stalin's orders, once the Leader of the People had seen the SD's documents, he realized they were useless fakes. What could he do with a photograph of Trotsky and a group of German officials. Who could forget that it was he, Stalin, who had invented the intimate relations between the Jewish Trotsky and the Judophobe fascists. And what was Trotsky doing in the case at all? Trotsky had never been close with Tukhachevsky! Doubts about the marshal himself were even sharper. Who could believe that he, who had escaped German captivity five times in the World War, would be rubbing elbows with the Germans? Glory, medals, the highest military rank at age forty-two, the most important post in the Army—he had all that. What more could they offer him in Berlin? To be sure, such categories as love of country and fidelity to duty did not exist for Stalin,



and he did not look for them in others. Stalin did not seriously believe in Tukhachevsky's Bonapartism. He destroyed Tukhachevsky because this was a man around whom others in the Army who were dissatisfied with his, Stalin's, usurpatious behavior *might* rally. But it wasn't possible to actually make such charges publicly.

That is not what we were speaking of, however. The decision to liquidate Tukhachevsky had already been made. It remained only to decide how to dress the act up before presenting it to the Army and the people. Thus, if Stalin did not initiate the fabrication of the "red folder," he knew it was a forgery from first glance. Any subsequent checking would only confirm that opinion.

However, the decision not to use the "red folder" was not dictated by doubts of its authenticity. In the end there were two more telling reasons.

The first was that, at the two previous, celebrated, trials and at most trials of less importance, only oral testimony had been presented, no documents. Presenting essential proofs, even fabricated, seriously threatened to diminish the speed of the Stalinist machine, if not to bring it to a standstill. It would be a most dangerous precedent. The public or their appointed representatives would in the future expect proof of guilt in some form they could touch, read, and study. The whole plan of the coup based on massive judicial slaughter was threatened. Stalin did not want to risk open slaughter. That would clearly signify seizure of the state, and the Stalinists feared that. They wanted their seizure to seem a defense against seizure by others. Their cruel protective measures took place under the cover of law, juridically doubtful, logically absurd, but nonetheless *law*, which, by the way, was enough for the Russian population who were used to anything. Documentary proof was repugnant to the spirit and idea of that upside-down law. The Stalinist machine was not capable of making up even approximately proper indictments for millions of people. It is enough to glance at the cases of the so-called "enemies of the people": five or six pages of cheap paper covered with the slovenly handwriting of the newly promoted investigator. Today, when our society still does not groan under the burden of excess legality, one must fill out tens of pages, almost a hundred pages, to bring a known and clearly guilty thief to court. In the end the thief will get—it is hard to say it—a year or so in prison.

The second reason Stalin did not use the "red folder" was that he



feared the Germans might double-cross him. As long as the accusations against the military officers were unsubstantiated, the Germans could react to them only as to any other propaganda. But they could respond to the published documents or mention them much more harmfully. They could tell the history of the "folder." That would give Hitler a double victory. Not only would the Army leadership be weakened, but the political leadership of Russia would also be discredited. Stalin would be held up to universal ridicule.

Tempting as it was to use the documents in this critical trial—they would impart solidity and parry the potential counteraccusation of arbitrariness—the "red folder" had to be left aside. Stalin made no use of it. He not only showed it to nobody, but he never once so much as referred to it.

The Stalinist brain trust had something to think about in June. They had a week to worry and make a very difficult decision. In the end Stalin, who never was inclined to delicacy, preferred a coarse farce. The most primitive, coarsely malevolent accusations were presented at the secret trial: treason, weakening defense capabilities, the attempt to seize power. Proofs were absurd and unsubstantiated. Of the special board only Budenny might have believed them. Only one thing was demanded of the judges: to conduct themselves loyally and not to interfere with Ulrikh prosecuting the case to the desired outcome. And that is how it was.

The short announcement tossed to the people was knocked together carelessly. Everything in it contradicted logic and common sense, but maybe they were counting on that. Stalin was a greater master of the stunning propaganda lie than Goebbels. He was also counting on Russia's endless patience.

We return to the trial's starting point. Of the sixteen main participants belonging to the military only two died natural deaths. Why then on that June day were some participants executioners, or judges, and others their victims? We will try to evaluate several factors that might have played a role in selecting the two groups. To make it easier, table 20.1 presents the facts about the participants in the trial.

*Nationality.* The hand of the great expert of the nationalities' question is easy to see. We will not have much to say about this either now or later, but you can judge for yourself: two Latvians, two Jews, two Lithuanians, and only two Russians. All of their names sound strange to the Russian ear, except one, Primakov, and it seems he may have

been a Jew. The average man of the people, contaminated by the remnants of the past, might think they were all "kikes." Lord save us, no one need tell him, but he might think it, he certainly might. How common it is to think that all traitors and spies are non-Russians.

The composition of the court, on the other hand, at least sounds entirely Orthodox: Belov, Kashirin, Shaposhnikov, Dybenko, Budenny. Alksnis does not fit, nor does Blucher seem to, but he is a Russian. His name was given to his serf grandfather by his master who was a great admirer of the Prussian field marshal.

There is no need any longer to prove that Stalin was an anti-Semite; and we have no particular interest in divining whether his anti-Semitism was pathological, religious, or political. He was using that weapon against the oppositionists already in the 1920s. The Bukharin group, which was primarily Russian, was counterposed to the Zinoviev-Trotsky faction, which was heavily Jewish. Russian party members from these groups were told directly that they did not belong. Stalin is said to have asked Preobrazhensky, "What are you doing in that Jewish company?"

In the 1930s Stalinist propaganda played up the oppositionist Jews' connections with the Gestapo. Strange as it may seem, that did not surprise the public. The Soviet press was usually silent about—or in any case did not emphasize—Hitler's Judophobia. After the signing of the Soviet-German pact in 1939, that became a firm rule. A consequence was to increase the number of victims among the Jewish population of occupied territory. The Soviet government did not try to evacuate Jews. Earlier, in 1939–40, the NKVD regularly turned in to the Gestapo German Communists of Jewish descent.

We cannot, of course, claim that the accused and judges were chosen exclusively because of the nationalities indicated by their names. But it was in 1934 that passports with a blank for "nationality" were introduced; there had already been carried out in Moscow two trials of terrible malefactors and traitors whose names for the most part were very inferior. Sow the good, the kind, the eternal! Something will remain and take root. If not now, then in 1947, 1949, 1953!

*Origins and Party Membership.* In this category the two groups A (accused) and J (judges) were almost equal. In the first, five were former tsarist officers; in the second, four. That small imbalance in the unproletarian character of group A was balanced by the greater representation of members of higher party organs: one member (Yakir), and two candidate members of the TSK (Tukhachevsky and Uborevich); in

Table 20.1 Characteristics of Participants in the June 11 Trial

Name of accused	Nationality	Former officer	Pre-1917 Party member
1. M. N. Tukhachevsky	Russian	X	
2. N. E. Yakir	Jew		X
3. I. P. Uborevich	Lithuanian	X	
4. V. M. Primakov	Russian?		X
5. B. M. Feldman	Jew		
6. A. I. Kork	Latvian	X	
7. R. P. Eideman	Latvian	X	
8. V. P. Putna	Lithuanian	X	
Total		5	2
Judges			
9. S. M. Budenny	Russian		
10. V. K. Blucher	Russian		X
11. P. E. Dybenko	Ukrainian		X
12. I. P. Belov	Russian	X	
13. N. D. Kashirin	Russian	X	
14. B. M. Shaposhnikov	Russian	X	
15. Ia. I. Alksnis	Latvian	X	
16. E. I. Goriachev	Russian		
Total		4	2

group J there were only two candidate members (Budenny and Blucher). The number of prerevolutionary Communists was the same in both groups.

Cavalrymen and Comrades-in-Arms of Stalin. Group J had the lead in these categories, 3:1 and 2:0, respectively.

Intelligentsia. Here group A unquestionably dominated, by a ratio of 7:2. Except for Primakov, they were the flower of the Army's intelligentsia; men of great military erudition and expansive, cultured outlook; authors of scholarly works; major innovators in military science. In group J only Shaposhnikov and Alksnis fit into that category. Blucher, although he had studied in the German Academy of the General Staff, was primarily a careerist.

*Unity of the Groups.* By this we mean the presence of service and personal associations among members of one group. From this point of

Studied in Germany	Cavalry	Fought with Stalin	Associations with members of other group	Military intelligentsia	Associations within the same group
X			3,7	X	2,5,7,8
X			2,3,5	X	1,4,5,7
X				X	1,2,5
	X				2
				X	1,2,6
				X	1,5,7,8
				X	1,2,6
				X	1,6
3	1	0		7	
<hr/>					
	X	X			8
X			2		5
			1,2		
	X				2
				X	
			1	X	
	X	X			1
1	3	2		2	

view group A seems to have been almost monolithic, while group J seems to have comprised an artificial conglomeration. That had its pluses and minuses for Stalin. It was easy to present the cohesive group A as a conspiracy. On the other hand, it would be difficult to split such a collective; it would be hard to bend them to one's will and to keep them from presenting a unified front at the trial—which is what happened. The individuals of group J could more easily be worked on in isolation. They did not have a chance to agree among themselves on a course of action.

*Intergroup Associations.* The corresponding column of the table shows that there were few connections, and those that existed could serve a specific purpose—camouflage. Inasmuch as information about the trial was skimpy and came mainly from rumors, former personal relations between the accused and the judges created the appearance of



objectivity. It was one thing for Tukhachevsky's confirmed enemies Budenny and Kashirin to condemn him, but quite another for his close friend Dybenko and long-time associate Alksnis to do so. The same could be said about Blucher, Dybenko, and Kashirin, friends and colleagues of Yakir. Apparently that was the role assigned Dubovoi.

Of course, the foregoing analysis has primarily an illustrative character. It is naive to suggest that Stalin, Ezhov, Voroshilov, and Vyshinsky used precisely these methods to select the two groups. But if only in part, these factors must have been considered by them. We will dare to assert that two of these factors played important, if not determining, roles in their decision: the opposition of Russians to non-Russians and the opposition of careerists to the intelligentsia.

Voroshilov was mentioned purposely in the previous paragraph. His name retains a sort of halo—a legendary hero with clean hands, a brave, but simplehearted warrior who did not involve himself in politics and was therefore not implicated in Stalin's acts. Alas, that is only another illusion maintained by ignorance of facts. During his career as leader of the RKKK, Voroshilov was more the politician than the military man. Although he did not occupy first place among them, Voroshilov was deeply involved in the affairs of the Stalinists.

Here are some facts: (1) In 1925 it was Voroshilov who publicly proclaimed the false version of Frunze's death to deflect from Stalin and himself the fully justified suspicions of responsibility for murdering him. (2) In 1930 he sanctioned the arrest of a large group of military specialists. (3) In 1937 he was an active and direct participant in the destruction of the command staff, not disdaining the role of provocateur. It is enough to recall his perfidious behavior in organizing the arrest of his friend and comrade-in-arms Yakir. A general picture of Voroshilov's behavior during that period only confirms this conclusion. There is not the slightest hint that Voroshilov protected anyone from repression, or even that he tried to. To the contrary, he signed everything, he sealed it all with his bloody hand. The People's Commissar jotted on a letter written by Yakir asking that he take care of his family, "I doubt the honor of a dishonorable man in general." That was all. Voroshilov preferred to wash his hands of the matter, knowing that shame and suffering awaited Yakir's wife and child.

This has nothing to do with bravery. In battle Voroshilov did not fear death; but Yakir, Tukhachevsky, Primakov, Shmidt, and many others

were not less courageous. Voroshilov's courage evaporated in the presence of Stalin.<sup>27</sup>

It is said that in 1936 and early 1937 Voroshilov was opposed, in theory, to the massive destruction of the RKKA's officer corps. The reasons were most prosaic. Voroshilov could not help but understand that without capable commanders he would not be able to lead the People's Commissariat and could not guarantee the Army's combat readiness. The turning point occurred on the threshold of the February-March plenum. Stalin and comrades posed the commissar a question widely used at the time, "Whom are you with? Them or us?" Other considerations, including the defense of the country, had to be put aside. Saving his skin, Voroshilov joined the executioners, with whom, it is true, he had much more in common than with the military. The First Red Officer stopped tormenting himself with doubts and gave himself body and soul to the destruction of the RKKA. Even Tukhachevsky, who did all of the ongoing work at the Commissariat for him, he gave over entirely to the Chekists. Telling him of his dismissal as his first deputy, he found not a single word of justification or comfort.

The main burden of preparing and carrying out the June villainy lay on the valiant men of the NKVD. Stalin hastened to show them his gratitude. A decree on decorating the Chekists was published on June 22. That they were not listed in alphabetical order leads one to think that their place in the list reflects the importance of their work. All the more that first of the honored was L. M. Zakovsky, whose participation in the trial of June 11 is undoubted.<sup>28</sup> N. E. Shapiro-Daikhovsky, P. A. Korkin, and P. E. Karamyshev also received the Order of Lenin. Ten men were awarded the Order of the Red Star. Other high-ranking executioners were mentioned. After a decent interval an announcement was made that Ezhov had been awarded the Order of Lenin on July 17. There was a great fuss in the press. Vyshinsky received his commendation on the twentieth.

## Proscription

The June trial turned out to be prologue to catastrophe. Repression against the high and middle command staff took on the character of general slaughter. It is not possible to explain why one or another commander perished. It makes more sense to ask why some survived.

There is a certain sad logic to the order in which the victims were

Table 20.2 Disposition of High Command Staff, by Rank<sup>29</sup>

Rank	Modern equivalent	Existed	Arrested	Returned	Perished
1. Marshal	Marshal	5	3	—	3
2. Army commissar I	General of the army	1	—	—	1*
3. Army commander I	General of the army	4	3	—	3
4. Fleet flag-officer	Admiral of the fleet	2	2	—	2
5. Army commander II	Colonel general	10	10	—	10
6. Fleet flag-officer II	Admiral	2	1	—	1
7. Army commissar II	Colonel general	15	15	—	15
8. Corps commander	Lieutenant general	55	49	1	48
9. Flag officer I	Vice admiral	6	5	—	5
10. Corps commissar	General lieutenant	28	25	2	23
11. Flag officer	Rear admiral	15	9	1	8
12. Division commander	Major general	199	136	11	125
13. Division commissar	Major general	97	79	10	69
14. Brigade commander	Major general or colonel**	397	221	21	200
15. Brigade commissar	Major general or colonel**	36	34	—	34
16. Corps engineer	Engineer Lieutenant general	2	2	1	1
17. Corps intendant	Lieutenant general	3	3	—	3
18. Corps doctor	Lieutenant general of medical services	2	2	—	2
19. Corps veterinarian	Lieutenant general of medical services	1	1	1	—
20. Division intendant	Major general	10	6	—	6
21. Division engineer	Engineer Major general	9	7	2	5
Totals		899	643	60	583

\*Ya. B. Gamarnik shot himself to death on May 31, 1937, to avoid arrest.

\*\*Rank dependent on responsibilities.

destroyed. First taken were those associated with the participants of the June 11 trial, then were those associated with the victims of the second group. A few were executed who dared to speak out even timidly against the terror (Kuibyshev, Fedko, Blucher), as were hundreds and thousands who said nothing. Finally the rulers of evil—the judges—were reached.

Losses in the high command staff can be delineated by the ranks of the victims, as seen in table 20.2. Lists published in 1935 and 1940 help in the task.

Of those of lieutenant general's rank or higher (lines 1-11, and 16-18 on the table) 93 percent died in the purge. For ranks corresponding to major general and colonel (lines 12-15, 20, 21) the figure is 58.5 percent. The names of those who perished are in the appendixes to this book.

Data on commanders of the rank of colonel and lower are not yet available. It is therefore impossible to say what the RKKA's losses were at those ranks in the Great Purge. There are few references to such losses in official sources; most are indirect and do not lend themselves to interpretation. The size of the loss is mentioned only once in a Soviet source and that in relative terms.<sup>30</sup> There it is said that 20 percent of all military officers died in the purge. In all of Soviet military literature, however, it is impossible to learn the absolute size of the officer corps at that time. The estimate we have made, which is necessarily rough, suggests that there were 100,000 to 130,000 officers on active duty in the Red Army in 1937 and 1938. That puts the loss at between 20,000 and 25,000. There is reason, however, to think that that significantly understates the loss.

In Yu. Petrov's book, *Building the Party in the Soviet Army and Fleet*,<sup>31</sup> it is said that the repression cut the number of Communists in the Army in half, from 250,000 to 125,000. We can assume that the NKVD's only targets in the military were commanders and political workers. All of the latter were Party members. Of the former, 80 to 85 percent were members. That figure climbs to 95 to 97 percent in the technical branches. Consequently, the losses in the Army's Party organization fell mainly on the officer corps. But if we recall that in those years expulsion from the Party automatically led to arrest, then we must also conclude that practically all of the commanders on active duty at the beginning of the purge were repressed. We must be very careful about such a conclusion.

We cannot definitively solve that problem without more information and that is not yet available. But we can make a few further observations. We have no reason to doubt Petrov's statistics. A Soviet author would not exaggerate the scale of the repression in an official publication; no one would let him. On the other hand, we cannot significantly increase our estimate of the size of the officer corps, recalling that early in 1937 a total of approximately 1,600,000 men were serving in the Red Army. We are forced therefore to think that the loss of cadre in two years of purge comprised approximately 100,000 men. This is not



an overstatement, because we are assuming admission into the Party was closed for those two years. If there were new admissions, we would have to increase the figures of the loss. It may be assumed, however, that some people who served in the Army's Party organization, but who were not at the time military servicemen, became part of that statistic. This does not include wives of commanders or noncommissioned soldiers who were expelled from the Party. They probably fall into the group of 25,000 we subtracted from Petrov's figures. We are speaking here of men in *special services*. These men served in the Army's counterintelligence while attached to the NKVD, but they worked directly in military units and were registered there on Party registers. There were a great many special servicemen: there was such an overseer in every company; from the battalion on up there were special detachments. The special servicemen numbered between 20,000 and 30,000, and they were liquidated almost to a man as were other categories of Chekists. Subtracting these we can decrease the figure for the loss of cadre to 70,000 to 80,000. If we also consider Petrov's statement that the repression took no fewer than 20,000 political workers, then the loss of "pure" commanders (combat officers, technicians, staff officers, instructors) can be set at 50,000 to 60,000.

Any attempt to explain why the repression was so widespread in the Army runs into numerous difficulties. It is impossible to assume that Stalin intended from the beginning to exterminate almost the entire officer corps, but the fact is there.

The greater part of the explanation, it seems to us, must be found in the psychology of mass terror, in conformity with its spontaneous development. Stalin had no reason to liquidate everyone in the Army one after another. The armed forces had accepted the order resulting from the state revolution. Even if the dictator could still see potential opponents or rivals in Tukhachevsky or to a lesser extent in Yakir, as hard as he might try he could not have found men of such potential in all the other victims. We must assume other causes. Having set off an avalanche of hate, suspicion, and blood, Stalin found himself unable to stop it until it had exhausted itself, run out of momentum.

It does not necessarily follow that after the June trial the Most Brilliant Commander of All Times and Nations became a passive spectator in the destruction of the RKKA. He was not that sort of man. If the scale of the repression in the Army seemed to him excessive, and he found himself unable to curtail it, he would still take an active leading role in it.

In June 1937 at the TSK plenum Stalin called for a hardening of punitive policy, not excepting the Army. In January 1938 a sealed letter of the TSK, "On Shortcomings in Party-Political Work in the RKKA and Measures to Overcome Them," was distributed by his order. The document demanded the discovery of concealed enemies of the people. It also attacked "silent" people, who had no criminal associations, but who were "politically spineless" and therefore potential enemies. It must have been easier for the proverbial camel to pass through the eye of a needle than to remain an "honest Soviet man" in such conditions. Righteous anger against enemies, their public defamation, ceaseless denunciations—nothing guaranteed safety. It was always possible to claim that someone was not exposing enemies with sufficient enthusiasm, or was doing so as a provocateur, or only to advance his career.

Neither were Stalin's subordinates in the Army napping. Voroshilov, Mekhlis, and Shadenko ceaselessly demanded that the last-born offspring of Tukhachevsky-Yakir and the minions of the Gamarnik-Bulin gang be rooted out. Throughout the country, as in the Army, a psychological climate was created that made mass terror unavoidable.

The people everywhere correctly understood their leaders' call. They rushed to search out live carriers of evil within their field of vision. A flood of denunciations swept through the country. The NKVD gladly made use of them and, more than that, "organized material" on those as yet untouched by denunciations. The higher one was on the scale of ranks, the more visible he was and the greater the probability that someone would denounce him. The motives were varied: envy, revenge for old offenses, personal dislike, career ambition; but the result was always the same.

This is how the proscription lists for arrest and execution were drawn up. Thousands of these documents went up the chain of command and landed on Stalin's and Voroshilov's desks. The reaction of the People's Commissar, who was frightened to death, was consistent. He did not dare contradict Ezhov, fearing that tomorrow he might present materials on him to the Great Leader.

Stalin's position was hardly better. Even in the summer of 1938, when it became clear that the repression was growing at a geometric progression and threatened to seize the whole population, even then he could not stop the demonic machine at will. Stalin could not tell Ezhov, "That's enough imprisoning and shooting of innocent people!" He

could not because it was he who had sired that bloody dwarf, because from the very beginning he had been part of the plot, because among the conspirators they could talk only of whom to take next and when. The word "guilt" was absent from their vocabulary as superfluous and harmful; otherwise they could not have begun the coup. And that is not all. At first the excesses of the repression suited Stalin's purposes inasmuch as it sucked into its whirlpool numerous informers, provocateurs, and executioners who had become expendable.<sup>32</sup> There came a moment, however, when it became absolutely necessary to give the order to stop. It was not easy for the Great Leader. He was afraid of the NKVD. He feared he would seem soft, kindly, and consequently weak. He feared a conspiracy against himself and his power that would accuse him of conniving with the enemy. He could not change the policy without changing people. To stop the repression he would have to behead the NKVD and then destroy it thoroughly.<sup>33</sup> And that would take time. For the time being he would have to accept the liquidation of people he would otherwise, perhaps, have left alive.

We will return directly to the Army. It is possible that Ezhov liquidated some of the commanders with Stalin's coerced sanction or entirely on his own. Of course, that is only a guess, but it might have been the case with Voroshilov's old friends Levandovsky and Gorbachev. When Goriachev, one of the eight judges in the June trial, learned of their arrest, he shot himself.

Fate did not spare the members of the Special Judicial Board, who sent their comrades-in-arms to their deaths.<sup>34</sup> Five died in the proscriptions of 1937-38. Only Shaposhnikov and Budenny died in their beds.

Stalin must have had mixed feelings about the judges. On the one hand, to leave them alive was extremely undesirable. Having done their dirty work, they were no longer valuable. On the contrary, they might expect something in return for their valuable service. Stalin must have known that most of them had pronounced sentence against their wills. When they recovered they might think of revenge. In any case, it would be hard to rely on their silence about what really happened at the trial. I. Erenburg has left witness; I. P. Belov, talking about the trial, shared his gloomy forebodings about his own and his colleagues' fate. Stalin had to take care of them.

At the same time there were arguments in favor of the opposite action. To remove the judges would inescapably throw a shadow over



the whole trial and cause doubts about the justness of the sentence.

One way or another the judges had to follow the judged. Shaposhnikov's survival can be explained by the undoubted sympathy Stalin felt for him. Shaposhnikov was practically the only man whom the dictator called by first name and patronymic both to his face and in his absence. Budenny, who gladly signed the sentence, seems to have been saved by his closeness to the Great Leader, which went back to the Civil War. There is however, a story, almost legendary, that Budenny escaped arrest only by a miracle.<sup>35</sup> It is worth mentioning that his wife Mikhailova, a singer at the Bolshoi, was killed.

Egorov, also a Stalinist toady from the time of the Civil War, was less lucky. In May 1937 he was temporarily promoted to deputy people's commissar in place of Tukhachevsky, but he was later sent to the provinces and soon disappeared entirely.

Stalin took an important step toward ending the purge in July 1938, by which time the repression had exceeded all conceivable bounds. L. P. Beria was made Ezhov's first deputy. In the several months of his decline the bloody Stalinist dwarf managed to take many more victims from the Army's ranks. The most famous of them were Fedko and Blucher. If the story that Ezhov shot Blucher in his office without a trial is true, very likely that incident served Stalin as the formal reason for finally getting rid of his favorite. The coincidence of the dates supports this theory. Blucher was killed on November 9; Ezhov was removed from his post as People's Commissar of Internal Affairs on December 9, 1938.<sup>36</sup>

Whatever Stalin's original intentions were, by the end of 1938 all that was left of the Red Army was the name. The officer corps had been utterly destroyed. All the deputy people's commissars and almost all the leaders of the central apparatus had disappeared. All regional commanders-in-chief, all commandants of military academies, all corps commanders, the overwhelming majority of divisional commanders, and more than half the commanders of regiments were gone.<sup>37</sup>

For the second time in twenty years the country would have to rebuild its army.



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## 21 The Victims: Motives of Inaction

To remember them means to regret that they are not.

—Kliuchevsky

“Do you really not see where this is leading? He will suffocate us all one by one like baby chicks. We must do something.”

“What you are suggesting is a coup. I will not do that.” That is how Marshal Tukhachevsky replied to his friend Corps Commander Feldman. The conversation took place at the end of 1936 or at the very beginning of 1937. Feldman did not stop there. He went to Kiev to another friend, Yakir.

The Army Commander had company at his dacha, among them the general secretary of the Ukrainian Party, S. Kosior. They drank, proposing toasts. Someone suggested, “Let’s drink to Stalin, whom we follow to the end—with our eyes closed.” The host objected, “Why closed? We follow Stalin, but with our eyes open.”

When the guests had departed, Feldman told Yakir of his talk with Tukhachevsky. The reaction was the same. Yakir still believed in Stalin.

The above episode—and there is no doubt that it happened—is the only attempt to organize resistance to terror in the Army that we know took place.

We are too distant from that time, of course, to recapture its moods. Still the question keeps coming back, persistently and poignantly: why did these strong, brave men, who had so many troops under their command, give themselves up to be killed without a murmur? Why didn’t they resist?

Of course, a lot was done to keep the officers from acting. Stalin had powerful forces on his side: the aura of power, the NKVD with its extensive network, and also millions of honest fools who would denounce others without a moment’s hesitation.

But the officers were far from weak. Many of them were connected by wartime friendships; they trusted one another to the end. The authority of Yakir, Tukhachevsky, and Primakov in the Army was

enormous. Many line commanders would have followed them with their regiments and divisions. They had only to call. But they didn't.

The enemy was powerful, but the officers were not lacking in bravery and resoluteness. Yakir had accomplished his legendary march in 1919 in less favorable conditions. And isn't it more honorable to die in battle than in a torture chamber?

Apparently the physical balance of forces did not play a role. These experienced warriors must have had some internal reasons, preventing them from defending themselves.

One simple explanation comes to mind immediately. Courage in war and courage in everyday life are not the same thing. Examples to illustrate this are familiar. The hero returning from war is helpless before the bureaucrat, the boor, the conman, and not infrequently before his wife. There at the front everything tells you to fight bravely: responsibility, discipline, comrades, and finally the enemy seeking to kill you. In peaceful conditions the threat is not usually so sharp, the enemy is almost invisible, the rules of the fight are different. Here you don't advance on the enemy en masse, and a different sort of courage is needed. You have to stand up alone against an authority behind whom stands the indifferent and servile masses. In war, bravery brings laurels; here, it threatens shame and humiliation.

These general observations are true enough, but in our case they are not sufficient. There is something else. We will try to explain what we have in mind, but the reader must not expect precise definitions, a clear picture, or rock-hard conclusions. The material we are discussing is very delicate and will not stand rough handling. We will base our account on several examples.

*Yakir.* The Revolution made him a military commander. A little past twenty and a student of chemistry, he proved to be not only a capable agitator and organizer, but also an outstanding commander, about whom legends were already growing during the Civil War. Yakir had a tenacious mind and a native intelligence. He could rally people and lead them in unequal battle. The human material the Revolution gave him was motley in the extreme: yesterday's underground revolutionary who did not know how to hold a rifle; green youth; Chinese volunteers; former tsarist officers; "the Red Robin Hood" Gregory Kotovsky; and Mishka Yaponchik, the Odessa bandit, with his boys.

Yakir was exceptionally brave. He threw himself into battle with the many various Whites. He was stirred to fight not only by revolutionary

ideals but also by tragic memories. He grew up Jewish in Kishinev, where he saw the horrible pogrom of 1903 with his own eyes.

After the war the young Yakir's military and Party career advanced rapidly. In 1921 he became commander of the Kiev Military District; in 1923, assistant commander of troops in the Ukraine and Crimea under Frunze; in 1924 he was made head of the Main Administration of Military Schools of the RKKA. In November 1925 he became commander of the Ukraine Military District; in December 1925, a member of the TSK of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) Ukraine; and in 1927, a member of the Ukrainian Politburo.

In 1928–29 Yakir, together with a group of the top-ranking commanders (Tukhachevsky, Blucher, Uborevich, Sediakin, and others), attended the German General Staff Academy. He earned highest distinction at graduation. Field Marshal Hindenburg, the aged president of Germany, gave Yakir Shleiffen's book *Cannae* and inscribed it very flatteringly, "To the best modern commander."

With Yakir's arrival the Ukrainian district became the primary training ground of the RKKA, where the newest methods of warfare were developed. Yakir was not a theoretician; he did not write books; but he may have understood the spirit of modern warfare better than all the other high-ranking commanders. The first paratroop units in the Red Army were created in his district, as was the first mechanized corps, the 45th under A. N. Borisenko. He worked hard to develop methods of cooperation between the branches of the military (land and sea forces, land and air forces) and imparted his style to his subordinates.

From the beginning Yakir attributed little importance to the strategy of destruction. He worked urgently at strategic defense and induced his commander colleagues to do so. The first systems of echelonned defenses were born in the Ukrainian Military District; partisan bases were first developed there in case of retreat. Tukhachevsky's conversion to strategic defense came about under the unobtrusive but firm influence of Yakir, despite the fact that Yakir was not only three years younger than Tukhachevsky but had not attended tsarist military academies or fought in the First World War.

Yakir's authority as a leader and teacher was uncontestable. It is no exaggeration to say he was idolized by his subordinates. He tirelessly fought martinets and swaggerers in the Army. With junior officers he was evenhanded, affable, and benevolent. He thought it more important to educate than to punish. The officer corps of the Ukrainian Military

District was always the best in the Army. Yakir knew almost all the commanders of the district, and from regimental commanders on up that relationship was so close that he was aware of their family problems. Yakir was distinguished by his genuine democratic spirit. He always resisted attempts to separate the officer corps from the soldiers, to turn it into a closed caste.

Our idyllic picture would not be complete if we did not mention another fact. Yakir was first and foremost a Bolshevik. His Bolshevism was not affected or forced as was many officers'. Yakir held Party ideals sacred. For him the Party's interests, the matter of building socialism, came first, before personal and professional considerations. Here is where Yakir's strength and greatness should be sought: in these high principles combined with altruism, absence of career ambitions, and profound decency. But precisely for those reasons in the decisive moments he was weak and helpless.

Yakir's deep conviction of the rightness of the cause he served at times made him act in ways hard to reconcile with this picture of his morality. In the chapter on Mironov we spoke of his attitude toward anti-Soviet rebellions while he was with the 8th Army. His beliefs were quite simple: (1) no negotiations, (2) the complete destruction of all rebels, (3) immediate execution of anyone caught with weapons, (4) in a number of cases the preventive execution of a certain percentage of the male population. The 8th Army left a bloody trail along the Don with thousands of executions. But Yakir was not an inveterate scoundrel or a bloodthirsty fanatic. On the contrary, his behavior after the war said otherwise.

Yakir was an important political figure. He alone among the military commanders was a full member of the TSK. (Gamarnik and Voroshilov were both commissars.) In that capacity Yakir had to deal with matters that were quite distant from military service. His role in building the Kharkov tractor factory is well known. He also took an active part in carrying out collectivization in the Ukraine. The results horrified him. The year 1933 was particularly terrible for Ukrainian villagers. Despite the drought Stalin's plan was carried out strictly by the book. It wasn't enough that millions of people in the villages died of starvation, but grain saved for seed was taken from the villages. Yakir and several other Ukrainian leaders suggested that the grain collection be halted and seed grain be returned to the farmers. Kosior, fearing Stalin, did not agree. Then Yakir, Dubovoi, and secretaries of the provincial com-



mittees Khataevich and Veger wrote to Moscow. Stalin grudgingly offered concessions, but he expressed his displeasure to Voroshilov: why couldn't military men mind their own business. It may be that his honesty cost Yakir promotion to marshal in 1935.

Earlier, in mid-1930, another more characteristic episode occurred. At the same time the former generals were being arrested in Moscow, the Ukrainian OGPU was cooking up a local affair. A large group of tsarist officers was accused of organizing a conspiracy with the aim of raising an anti-Soviet rebellion. Among other things, they were accused of planning to kill the top leaders of the Ukrainian Military District: Yakir, Dubovoi, and Khakhanian. Yakir strongly protested the provocation and did not hesitate to lock horns with the chief Ukrainian Chekist, Balitsky. The case went right to the top. On December 30 Yakir and Dubovoi were called to Moscow where they were received by Ordzhonikidze. They succeeded in defending the majority of the accused. Balitsky was transferred from the Ukraine. The reader may compare Yakir's and Tukhachevsky's behavior in the same situation.<sup>1</sup>

Yakir was neither weak nor cowardly. He did not fear the all-powerful GPU, but he was powerless before the Party. In 1937 Yakir tried to rescue Shmidt and Kuzmichev at the risk of running afoul of Ezhov. He asked Stalin to intervene when his good friend Garkavy was arrested. But he could not rebel against the policy of repression because the Party, his Party, stood behind it. The Party was everything for him; serving it gave his life content and meaning. It was impossible, unthinkable for him to change his convictions. This is the tragedy of the whole generation that made the Revolution. Yakir did not quail before any enemy, but to raise his hand against the Party—even the thought of such a thing was unnatural for him.

That is why he did not call out his crack regiments, which could have destroyed the NKVD. That is why in the face of death he cried, "Long live the Party! Long live Stalin!" Yes, Stalin, because for Yakir the Great Leader and the Party were the same.

*Tukhachevsky.* Although Tukhachevsky and Yakir spent many years in harness together and faced death together, they were entirely different people. Tukhachevsky was made of different clay from his colleague. This was not just a matter of class origins, but of personality. If for Yakir ideals that he served with religious fervor stood in first place, then Tukhachevsky's primary motivation was ambition. It was not Stalin's unrestrained striving after power, nor Voroshilov's careerism,

that drove him to make any compromise with his conscience, but ambition, pride, hunger for excellence, glory, the desire to be first, the best. By itself ambition is not necessarily negative. On the contrary, lacking it, it would be hard to be a great commander.

Tukhachevsky's ambitions were serious and far-reaching. In that way he resembled the young Bonaparte, and the comparison was obvious to many. But in vain did detractors ascribe such ambitions to him. Tukhachevsky was not enticed by the role of political leader. If he were carried away in dreams, he saw himself crowned only with a commander's glory. He considered strategy his calling. That is apparent in his early written works.

A lieutenant just yesterday and not yet thirty, he wrote with enviable assurance. On every page one can find naive, immature, and basically wrong statements; but the tone was nonetheless certain, dry, didactic. The author had no doubts: he trusted his own conclusions more than the entire previous experience of mankind.

Tukhachevsky was gifted. Natural intelligence, decisiveness, independence of judgment, courage—all of these qualities distinguished him from the mass of revolutionary commanders. He was handsome, attractive to women, exceptionally strong,<sup>2</sup> and highly cultured. He especially loved music: he built violins, haunted the concert halls, and was among the first to notice and support the young Shostakovich.

However, it was not only his personal qualities that accounted for the success of Tukhachevsky's career. Two circumstances helped him greatly. First, he joined the Party early, in April 1918. For Yakir the Revolution was a desired and logical occurrence. Tukhachevsky saw it as unavoidable reality, a natural phenomenon or disaster. When he returned from captivity, he found the old army in its death agony. He went to the only organized power at the center, the Bolsheviks, to participate in building a new army. Joining the Party was not a result of enlightenment or ideological rebirth. It was an entry fee, a necessary condition for a military career. Tukhachevsky was not a timeserver. He simply decided that the Bolsheviks were here to stay. He did not imagine himself outside the military profession. In tsarist times it was almost impossible to get ahead if you were not a member of the Russian Orthodox Church. True faith was not demanded. Indeed, that was impossible. The military existed to break the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." But external loyalty to the church was required. Now it was necessary to convert to a new state religion; that was all. Tukha-

chevsky's quick-ripening Bolshevism was and remained mainly for show.

As a young officer working in the military department of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, Tukhachevsky was soon noticed and valued. He was sent to a high command post in the Army. His courageous behavior during Muraviev's Left-SR revolt was the second most important moment of his career. Now in the eyes of the central authorities and local commissars he was finally one of them, a real Red commander. He was given access to all information. Other commanders, who were thought of as military specialists, were not trusted in this way. As a rule they knew less than the Revolutionary Military Council members attached to them.

Tukhachevsky fought well. Successes on the Eastern Front brought him great glory. Stalin, who was slow to praise, called him "the demon of the Civil War." They transferred him to the Southern Front against Denikin, and again he displayed his best qualities. Tukhachevsky was a born operations commander. In the Civil War, operations pushed strategy to the background. Successive battles over a short period decided the fate of a campaign. Many, including Tukhachevsky, took that temporary, specific condition as an unalterable law for all future wars. It is in this conviction that the ideological foundation of the blitzkrieg and the strategy of destruction should be sought. Tukhachevsky became one of its foremost proponents for many years. Even the failure of the Polish campaign did not cool his enthusiasm. As he saw it, the defeat was the result of strategic miscalculation; large operational mistakes on the neighboring fronts were not fatal. Most important was the underestimation of the enemy's resources and his ability to strike back. But the "destructive" form of action had an irresistible attraction for Tukhachevsky. He hoped that the new military equipment would give this strategy the decisive trump. He expended a great deal of energy to establish the technical basis of the Red Army. Only toward the end of his life did he partly revise his strategic views.

We will not develop this topic further; it is treated in sufficient detail in the preceding chapters. Other things are much more important in describing Tukhachevsky's personality. During the Civil War he performed many valuable services for the Soviets, not only on the fronts against the Whites, but also in suppressing popular uprisings. The glory of the suppressor was not as great, but it was properly valued by the government. After his success at Kronshtadt, Tukhachevsky was



immediately sent against Antonov. (It is interesting that the romantic adventurer G. Kotovsky, who was also active in suppressing the Tambovshchina, fulfilled his role in the punitive expedition with great reluctance.)

These episodes from 1921, which are morally suspect however you look at them, throw new light on Tukhachevsky's personality. They display his political immaturity and his social callousness. Characteristically he not only put the rebellion down, but not long before he wrote a manual on how to do it.<sup>3</sup> It would seem that had the little Civil War dragged on, Tukhachevsky might have become a regular suppressor.

If we keep this side of him in mind, his methods in the polemic with Svechin do not seem so surprising. From using political labels he logically moved on to persecuting his opponent, who was already in the NKVD's torture chamber: he assiduously played first violin in the Party's orchestra of political persecutors. Neither in 1930 nor in 1937 did Tukhachevsky intercede for anyone.

Tukhachevsky thought himself an integral part of the Soviet establishment. He had gotten everything from it—glory, decorations, high position. He would hardly have accepted the post of executioner, but the power he served and that rewarded him so generously was in his eyes God-given—itself and its bearers. Thus ambition came to contradict patriotism and paralyzed it, made it abstract, speculative.

Tukhachevsky was organically incapable of social protest, let alone action. He did not confront Stalin in 1936 when he saw that the dictator had taken the wrong course concerning the defense capabilities of the USSR, nor did he later when Stalin attacked the Army.

By a bitter irony of history Stalin destroyed Tukhachevsky, fearing he was another Bonaparte, while the marshal was wholly unsuited for the role. In his moment of truth he proved to have nothing inside the cover of his strong and purposeful personality. His pursuit of glory proved expensive. In the face of this mortal danger he felt loneliness, isolation, and spiritual weakness. He did not heed Feldman's warning a few months before the catastrophe. After he was removed from his duties on May 11, he no longer doubted he would be killed, but he did nothing to defend himself. His own life, the Red Army, which he had worked so hard to build, even the fate of his Motherland, suddenly meant nothing to him. Everything had been destroyed, it was all in vain, his life had lost its meaning, there was nothing to hope for in his last hour.<sup>4</sup> He could not, like Yakir, die for the Party idea, because he



had never believed in it. "It seems to me as if all this were a dream," was all Tukhachevsky could say in court. He put his head in his hands and remained silent for the rest of the session.

*The Military Council, June 1-4.* Eighty of the highest-ranking military leaders of the country accepted, without a murmur, the Great Leader's brazen act that falsely slandered their comrades-in-arms. He forced them to pronounce the death sentence, and they complied. Except for Dubovoi, no one dared express doubts.

What made them do it? Obsequiousness, indifference to the fate of others, malicious joy at others' misfortune, fear? Possibly fear together with confusion played the major part. S. P. Uritsky said that after the meeting he, like all the rest, left the hall with the firm conviction that they would all soon be arrested.

It is easier to understand the behavior of Budenny and others like him who were openly glad to see the fall of the hated intellectuals. But they were the minority. Alksnis and Khalepsky, Tukhachevsky's closest associates, could not have thought that way, and they did not. Yakir's comrades Fedko, Krivoruchko, and Khakhanian did not think that way. The giant Krivoruchko, who commanded the 2nd Cavalry Corps after Kotovsky, was distinguished by his spontaneity and unrestrained morality. He worshipped Yakir, who treated his behavior very gently, like a father. In other circumstances Krivoruchko would have given his life for the Army commander without hesitation. Here he kept his peace. He kept his temper; he did not attack the offender, whom he could have crushed with a finger. Only later in prison did Krivoruchko's nature come through. He grabbed an investigator and throttled him and then using his body as a club beat back his guards—until they shot him.

Several dozen brave men, whose profession demanded they not lose their heads in the moment of danger, who led their men in battle, sat shamefully silent. Stalin spat in their faces and they just lowered their eyes, unable to swear or even to scream in helpless rage.

Four long days they sat together and were unable to come to an agreement. They had several alternatives: passive resistance, open protest, or even physical action against Stalin and Voroshilov.<sup>5</sup> They preferred servile approval. A year and a half later almost none of them were still alive.

*Blucher.* For several years he was the military dictator of the Far East. Conditions on the border, expectation of a clash with Japan, gave him unlimited power. Blucher's authority among his subordinates was

unquestioned. Ten thousand versts from Moscow, linked only by the thread of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, he was well shielded from Stalin.

The few hundred private guards who accompanied Mekhlis and Frinovsky could not, of course, frighten him. One word from Blucher and they would cease to exist. What could Stalin do after that? Send the Red Army marching against the Far East? Hardly.

But Blucher did nothing, and the NKVD harvested his commanders. Then without a murmur he set off for Moscow, where he could not expect any help. The hero of Perekop had lost courage, laid down his arms. When he recovered his senses a few months later, it was too late.

The twofold treachery in June, accepting the role of executioner of his comrades, had deprived him of his courage and sharp wits. It had even blunted his instinct for survival. In the Far East the Red Army had its last chance to oppose Stalin.

The surprising passivity of the commanders of the Red Army in 1937 and 1938 will long fascinate psychologists and historians. Today we have too few facts to research the problem fully. However, we can draw one lamentable conclusion now. Yakir, Tukhachevsky, Blucher, and many other talented commanders, strong personalities, courageous warriors, did not withstand the ultimate test and proved unworthy sons of the Motherland. They did not just give their own lives to the tyrant, they put the whole Army at his feet.

No one is guilty because he is born a slave;  
but the slave who not only does not strive to be free, but who justifies  
and prettifies his slavery . . . such a slave is a groveler and cad who provokes a  
natural feeling of indignation, scorn, and loathing. — Lenin

We will digress for a short while from the complex intrigues and gloomy secrets of the Moscow court. We will sip the invigorating atmosphere of those years. Let us see how the Soviet press and public reacted to these events.

We will begin a little before the beginning, in the summer of 1936. So as not to bore the reader, we will confine ourselves to material from one newspaper, the official organ *Izvestiia* (News) of the Council of Workers' Deputies.

The Soviet people had just been given (actually presented for discussion, but no one was about to take it back) a new constitution, the Stalin Constitution. It was undoubtedly a landmark in man's history. A distant precedent might be sought in 1215 in England when the Magna Carta was accepted, but the scale of the events was vastly different. Our people's joy and gratitude were unbounded.

Representative entries in *Izvestiia* between July 1936 and the end of June 1937 include the following:

July 6. The chief editor of *Izvestiia*, N. I. Bukharin, wrote in an article "The Paths of History": "If we were to seek one word to express these changes, we would certainly be right to say: unification or consolidation, . . . consolidation of the widest popular masses around the party, around Stalin."

July 11. A rhymed message from the Belorussian people to comrade Stalin contained these lines:

We heard Kaganovich's word here  
In Gomel he helped our Party grow  
The workers of Vitebsk remember Ezhov,  
Who labored hard for the Party.

*July 14.* Through the joyous events shortcomings were not neglected. An article entitled "Why Are There No Gramophone Records?" appeared.

*July 16.* A report by A. I. Mikoyan: "We will achieve an abundance of food products." It is appropriate to mention here an anecdote of those years, which, it is true, did not get into the papers: A delegation of workers came to the Academy of Sciences to ask that the letter "M" be excluded from the Russian Alphabet as useless. As they explained it there was no meat, no butter (*maslo*), no margarine, no macaroni, no soap (*mylo*). All that began with "M" that was available was the Commissar of Trade Mikoyan, but there wasn't much sense in keeping a special letter around just for him.

There was also an order of the TSIK USSR to relieve comrade G. Ia. Sokolnikov, from his duties as People's Commissar of Forestry and transfer him to local work in the commissariat.

*July 20.* On the tenth anniversary of the death of F. E. Dzerzhinsky, a photo was published of the Great Leader in the embrace of Iron Felix (summer 1925).

*July 22.* The nonstop flight of Chkalov, Baidukov, and Beliakov, from Moscow to Chita via Petropavlovsk was announced.

*July 24.* The life of the people became better, more prosperous. This advertisement appeared:

The PRAGUE Restaurant is open

Roof Garden

Meals prepared by experienced chefs

*August 2.* A speech by L. M. Kaganovich, "The Stalinist Year in Rail Transport," was reported.

*August 10.* The Soviet people read with pleasure an article by the well-known publicist Karl Radek, "How to Become Chkalov: If you want to be a Chkalov, heed the call of our great leader and teacher Stalin: study, study, and study to catch and surpass the capitalist world."

*August 12.* Professor E. Tarle in an article "Historical Parallels" compared the electoral systems in the USSR and in the West.

*August 20.* Pushkin wrote: "We do not have a parade, we have a war." As if to prove the poet's words, the lead article screamed "Trotskyite-Zinovievite Gang on Trial." The trial had just begun in open court, but the paper ran in its first column telegrams from workers: "NO MERCY! SHOOT THE FASCIST MURDERERS!" Below



there followed an official statement about the beginning of the trial. The case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite terrorist center was in court. The accused included Zinoviev, Kamenev, Evdokimov, I. N. Smirnov, and twelve others. (According to the Stalinist Constitution all nationalities of our country were completely equal. Therefore the list of accused included nine Jewish names plus Zinoviev (Radomyslsky), Kamenev (Rozenfeld), one Armenian, one Pole, and three Russians.)

The judges were: chairman V. V. Ulrikh, members I. O. Matulevich and V. G. Nikitchenko, alternate I. T. Golikov, secretary A. F. Kostushko, state prosecutor A. Ia. Vyshinsky.

The accused admitted the charges against them, but it is not the trial itself that interests us here.

*August 21.* From the lead article "Fascist Monsters": "The stimulus of the underground is hunger for personal power." Headline on the first column: WORKERS OF THE SOVIET UNION UNANIMOUSLY DEMAND THAT PEACEFUL LABOR BE PROTECTED, SHOOT THE FASCIST GANG!

That, so to speak, was the official slogan. What of the real Soviet people? Maybe just a few of them were surprised, even perplexed, by the monstrous metamorphosis of their recent leaders? Not in the least! They immediately understood who was who and what was what. The interrogation of the accused was still under way, but the people were already expressing their firm and final opinion. A schoolgirl from Kadievka expressed it best of all. Here is the end of her poem, published on the second day of the trial:

Thrice scorned, loathsome creatures.

Whom did they dare threaten with death.

No! Expect no more mercy.

There's only one sentence for you: shoot them like dogs.

In truth, from the mouths of babes. . . .

There were ten other comments above that one all saying one thing: SHOOT!

*The writers of Leningrad:* A. Tolstoi, V. Shishkov, Iu. Libedinsky, N. Brykin, G. Belitsky spoke out. Together, unanimously: "This is the vilest treachery of all the treason known in the history of mankind."

The public's favorite, Karl Radek, was not left out. He wrote in an article, "The Trotskyite-Zinovievite Fascist Gang and Their Hetman Trotsky": "The accused do not have and never did have a political program. Only a desire for personal power." He had a few choice epithets for Trotsky: "fascist *ober-bandit*," "bloody bandit," "bloody

jester." Radek was sure the proletarian court would bring in the verdict the "bloody killers deserve. . . . The chief organizer of the gang and its deeds, Trotsky, has already been nailed to his shameful post by history. He will not escape the sentence of the world proletariat."

Nor, comrade Radek, will you escape the sentence of the Military College of the Supreme Court, a later historian might say.

*August 22.* The lead article: "The Hour of Revenge Approaches."

New notes sound in friendly chorus: UNRAVEL THE CRIMINAL TANGLE TO THE END! DISENTANGLE THE THREADS LEADING TO TOMSKY, SOKOLNIKOV, THE LEADERS OF THE RIGHT OPPOSITION, RADEK, SEREBRIAKOV! How life hurries on: only yesterday they had run Radek's article.

The other of the two leaders of the right opposition, N. I. Bukharin (Tomsky was named), was as before the editor of *Izvestiia*. That edition came out under his signature.

*The Moscow writers.* V. Stavsky opened the meeting. V. Kirshon, V. Inber, E. Zozulia, M. Shaginian, the poets Lugovskoi, Lakhuti, and others spoke of their enormous scorn for the inveterate double-dealers and murderers, and demanded they be shot. They acknowledged the greetings of comrades Stalin, Voroshilov, and Yagoda.

We promised not to discuss the trial itself, but we cannot refrain from mentioning one episode:

### Interrogation of I. N. Smirnov

VYSHINSKY: When did you leave the center?

SMIRNOV: I did not plan to leave it, there was nothing to leave.

V: Did the center exist?

S: What center are you talking about?

In turn the procurator asked several of the accused "Did the center exist?" and they willingly confirmed that it did.

*A statement by General Procurator Vyshinsky.* "Serebriakov and Sokolnikov have already been brought to trial. The matter of the others is under investigation."

There was no announcement in the papers that on that very day one of the leaders of the rights, M. P. Tomsky, shot himself at his dacha in Bolshevo. Soon thereafter the TSK condemned his act a weakness unworthy of a Bolshevik.

Comments from the provinces called him "A secret Trotskyite: Double-dealer excluded from the Party."

N. Izgoev, a former assistant on Miliukov's émigré paper, called them "Trotsky's dive-bombers."

*August 23.* Lead article: "Shoot the Rabid Dogs."

Headlines on the first column: UNRAVEL THE EVIL TANGLE TO THE END, EXPLAIN ALL TIES OF RYKOV, BUKHARIN, UGLANOV, RADEK, AND PIATAKOV WITH THE CENTER.

WE INDIGNANTLY NOTE THE LOW DOUBLE-DEALING OF THE RIGHTS. INVESTIGATE AND EXPLAIN TO THE END, demand the workers.

Bukharin signed that issue of the paper, too.

*Speech of General Procurator Vyshinsky.* The state prosecutor spoke for four hours and concluded with the very precise juridical formulation, "I demand you shoot the rabid dogs, every one of them."

An announcement of a new altitude record by pilot V. Kokkinaki appeared nearby.

From a poem by N. Sidorenko:

They will not save their slippery skins.  
The sword of the proletarian dictatorship,  
The sword that unerringly strikes  
Can slice vile creatures.

From an article by V. Antonov-Ovseenko: "Kill them all." (This was still another prophet of his own fate.) Everyone speaking out in the paper agreed with the sentence.

A brief article on the discovery of terrorists in the People's Commissariat of Agriculture in Uzbekistan was titled "Trotskyite Offspring Uncovered."

People's artist from Georgia Ak. Vasadze wrote, "Destroy the villainous people of this villainous case."

*August 26.* The death of S. S. Kamenev, commander-in-chief during the Civil War was announced.

"There will be no mercy for you, traitors of the people!" wrote Sofia Bortman, pediatrician from the Bauman region. "THE COURTS VERDICT IS OUR VERDICT!"

*August 29.* Botvinnik and Kapablanka were victorious in a tournament in Nottingham.

*August 30.* The flight of V. Molokov was announced.

And thus, the first show trial was over. The protests fell silent, the

people returned to their creative work. Stalin and the NKVD set about getting ready for the next trial. The experiences of August would be analyzed and learned from. In the future the noisy preparation would be noisier and more massive, the sentences more varied.

*December 25.* A speech by T. D. Lysenko, at a meeting of the All-Union Academy of Agricultural Science was quoted: "I do not understand how Vavilov can insist on his mistaken conclusions after a conclusive examination. That is not simply wrong now, but harmful."

N. I. Vavilov had second thoughts, and during the next trials carefully added his voice in support. That was historically progressive, but it did not save him from death in prison.

*December 26.* An all-union conference of the wives of the command and administrative staff of the RKKA was reported. The story also carried a photo of Stalin, Voroshilov, and Zhdanov among the commanders' wives. Stalin sat next to S. L. Yakir during the meeting. Talking with her affably, he said, "You take care of the commander. He is very valuable to us."

*December 29.* It was announced that an all-union census would be conducted on January 6. The census did take place as scheduled, but the results never saw the light of day, and those who conducted it were shot.

#### 1937: THE FINAL YEAR OF THE SECOND FIVE-YEAR PLAN

*January 3.* Yesterday Stalin received the German writer Lion Feuchtwanger. Their conversation lasted three hours. Feuchtwanger was completely charmed and wrote everything Stalin wanted.

*January 16.* N. I. Bukharin signed for the last time as editor of *Izvestiia*. From then on it was signed by a faceless editorial board. That was easier.

*January 21.* THE DAY OF LENIN'S DEATH. Next to that article in the first column was a piece entitled DAMNED TRAITORS.

The NKVD under the leadership of Ezhov has unmasked a parallel center: Piatakov, Radek, Sokolnikov, Serebriakov. . . .

They were the most dangerous, most evil enemies of our people. These Trotskyite beasts, bloody and cynical, worse than Denikin, worse than Kolchak, worse than the worst White guards, soaked in the blood of workers and peasants. . . .



Radek, that cringing, hypocritical, fornicating scum, poisonous Trotskyite scum, concealing poisonous teeth behind his fawning smile. . . . and these evil enemies of Lenin, these villains dared call themselves Leninists. . . . Judge them with all the severity of the law, judge strictly and mercilessly. Destroy all the Trotskyite filth without mercy.

*January 22.* A session of the TSIK RSFSR: acceptance of the new constitution.

*January 24.* (The paper was not printed on Saturday the 23rd) A lead article, in three columns: "Traitors, Lackeys of Fascism, Base Restorers of Capitalism": "Crush the Trotskyite scum. That is the unanimous demand of all honest people who love their Motherland and freedom."

No telegrams and outraged protests from citizens appeared yet.

Bruno Yasensky's article, "The German boots of Mr. Trotsky" described "the professor of double-dealing, Radek. . . ." Now it was Radek's turn to wear the abusive epithets. Yasensky took his place as publicist. He would do his best at that trial, but the NKVD did not believe the articles.

There were official announcements about the trial of the anti-Soviet Trotskyite center. The accused included Piatakov, Radek, Sokolnikov, Serebriakov, Muralov, Livshits, Drobnis, and ten others. The court consisted of Ulrikh, Matulevich, N. M. Rychkov. The prosecutor was Vyshinsky. Defense attorneys were Braude (for accused Kniazev), Kommodov (Pushin), Kaznacheev (Arnold). The organizers of the trial thought it would look better to have some defense attorneys.

*January 25.* In the lead article, "Allies and Abettors of the Fascist Aggressors" we read, "Radek is a fornicating, thoroughly rotten double-dealer, a dishonorable political intriguer, an old scout of Trotskyism, an evil Jesuit, outdoing even Loyola, Talleyrand, and Fouché."

Radek must have been flattered to be put in such company! The article continued, "waves of popular anger, tumultuous and growing, sweep from all ends of our great country to the doors of the House of Unions. Thousands, tens of thousands of meetings are held night and day in factory shifts, in mines, at kolkhozes."

And in fact angry comments took up two whole columns, and the court report two more.

Decorated professor of medicine N. I. Burdenko wrote, "Punish the

enemies of the people without mercy!" If memory does not fail, the Hippocratic oath does not contain such a phrase.

From an article "Word of a Mother": "I am a woman, I am a mother, I am a grandmother. But my hand would not shake for a second if they told me to carry out the merciless sentence, which the Supreme Court *must* pronounce on them all."

In all times, despite the large rewards, there has always been a shortage of executioners. But here was a volunteer executioner, a grandmother at that. Here is a heretofore unknown achievement of the Stalinist era! We almost forgot to mention who that courageous lady was. Remember, dear countrymen, Maria Mikhailovna Vasileva, a worker at the "Red Triangle" factory. People should know their executioners.

B. Yasensky wrote of "Professor double-dealer." It is not hard to guess that it was about Radek.

Lion Feuchtwanger wrote on the first day of the trial: "Already the first day of the court proceedings have *shown the desire*<sup>1</sup> to carry out this important trial peacefully, with dignity, and impressively. The guilt of the accused seems already mostly proven. However, in the interests of determining the truth once and for all I hope that in the course of the trial the motives for which the accused have made their detailed confessions will be made clear."

There is no argument that their guilt seemed proven. The problem was only that there was no proof, for example, documents. Everything was based on the testimony of the accused about themselves and others, that is, on slander and self-slander. Therefore Feuchtwanger made this reservation in the spirit of rotten Western liberalism. Never mind that, as later articles would show, the progressive German writer was satisfied with what was given. Possibly he remembered the Hegelian postulate "all that is real is reasonable." Apparently the Moscow air has some magical quality that deprives even those who have no use for it of reason.

K. Volsky's "The Scorned *Ober*-Traitor" was about Trotsky.

#### AN ANGRY WORD FROM THE WORKERS OF MOSCOW

Weaver Topchevskaia of the Trekhgorka factory: "For me Trotsky and his gang are worse than Hitler! Hitler at least discarded his mask! That scum Radek, how he fooled us, flattering, and worming his way. I'd like to kill him with my own hands!"

M. M. Vasilieva was not alone in her noble anger. Maybe we see the

start of something new here, a national movement of women executioners.

Secretary of the Party committee Beliaeva wrote, "We've got to squeeze the Trotskyite-Fascist gang of traitors and the traitors led by Bukharin out of the rightist camp. Hatred boils in the hearts of the workers of Trekhgorka. We must become Chekists."

Yes, there were women in the Russian Party committees.

"Bukharin, Rykov, and everyone who was with them must be made to answer. It must be thoroughly investigated, what the degree of their involvement was in the crimes of the Trotskyite gang!" Such was the unanimous demand of the workers at the Voitovich factory.

It seemed that Nikolai Ivanovich was to be awarded highest honors, that is, capital punishment, for many years of faultless struggle with Trotskyism.

From Leningrad, the senior female worker of the Skorokhod factory Voronova, wrote: "We are sure that the organs of the NKVD will even more vigilantly guard the interests of our people and, most importantly, save our great leaders. And we will help them in this work however we can."

They used to say, "A woman's path is from stove to door." Now she has two other paths to choose: to be an executioner or a Chekist.

From workers in the Tbilisi locomotive repair shop: "Destroy every last scum."

Academician A. Palladin: "We demand the complete destruction of the whole gang."

From people's artist Yablochkina: "We must once and for all clear our land of these despised people."

An article by P. Lapinsky called it: "The monstrous but logical development."

*January 26.* The lead article, "Trotskyite Monsters, Stranglers of the People," proclaimed, "They will be wiped from the face of the earth."

A. Tolstoy's "Plan for World War Nipped in the Bud" was a professional analogy between Trotsky and . . . Stavrogin.

Yakub Kolas wrote: "They have no right to live." Let history not be confused. It was not Kolas who "called for mercy for the fallen." That was Pushkin.

Aleksei Stakhanov, Makar Mazai: "Wipe Piatakov, Radek, Sokolnikov, and the whole rotten gang from the face of the earth! We demand the vile roles of Bukharin and Rykov be investigated to the end. Mercy for no one!"

Professors of chemistry B. Klimov, A. N. Nesmeianov, V. I. Nikolaev, O. E. Zviagintsev condemned the traitors.

The opening of the Moscow Institute of Cosmetics was not neglected. About a hundred people visited the first day, it was reported.

From a poem by Aleksander Zharov:

Supreme Court!

Strike the filthy paws

Of monsters, sowing flames of war,

So the fornicating suckling of the Gestapo

Judas-Trotsky feels the blow.

*January 27.* The lead article was "Trotskyite Marauders— Scouts of the Intervention." Another headline read: WE WILL BEAT ENEMIES WITH STAKHANOVITE LABOR!

"We demand merciless revenge against the vile traitors of our great Motherland. We demand the destruction of the vile monsters." So wrote academicians V. Komarov, A. Bakh, B. Keller, A. Arkhangelsky, N. Vavilov, N. Gorbunov, I. Gubkin, G. Krzhizhanovsky, A. Terpigorev; honored scientists N. Obratsov, E. Pavlovsky, A. Speransky; and professors V. Veger, V. Vysotsky.

"There is no room on earth for that gang!"—from the resolution of a meeting of Moscow composers and musicians.

*January 28.* Nikolai Ivanovich Ezhov was awarded the rank of General Commissar of State Security.

Ia. I. Alksnis was confirmed as Deputy People's Commissar of Defense and Commander of the Air Force; V. M. Orlov as Deputy People's Commissar and Commander of the Navy.

Academician Bogomolets: They must be destroyed.

A. Korneichuk: Shoot the scum!

An article by Vsev. Ivanov: "Monsters."

General Commissar of State Security G. G. Yagoda was transferred to the reserves.

"Rub out the traitors!" demanded the collective of the Arctic Institute and professors P. Samoilovich and V. Iu. Vize; doctor of geology N. N. Urvantsev; and others (altogether 170 signatures).

#### VILE SCUM

"Once and for all stamp out fascist vermin," and so forth. The signatures included: honored artists A. Gerasimov, S. Gerasimov, K. Iuon, D. Moor, E. Lansere, E. Katsman, I. Mashkov, I. Grabar, M. Cheremnykh, D. Shterenberg; artists Favorsky, Perelman, Sokolov-



Skalia, Ioganson, and others; and sculptors I. Shadr, B. Mukhina, S. Lebedeva, S. Merkulov, and others.

*January 29.* Popular rejoicing on the occasion of Ezhov's appointment. Congratulatory letters of collectives of workers.

Vyshinsky's speech: "I demand only death!"

Foreign information: "The Gestapo in disarray."

*A Cossack Song*

From the Don, Terek, and Ural  
A single cry flies across the country  
You can't just take a viper's sting  
You must take a viper's head off!

From a poem by P. Markish, IN RETURN FOR EVERYTHING

We'd drive you to the slaughterhouse with ropes around your necks  
So the eagle eye could watch you with scorn  
of him who suffered in the trenches for the Motherland  
of him who became the Motherland in the hearts of the people.

Not everything is clear here. Only Stalin could have become the Motherland in the hearts of the people. But he never did happen to be in the trenches. Could this be about two people? Then undoubtedly the second must have been Voroshilov. His trench exploits are, of course, unknown to us, but we can forgive the author some poetic license. All the more since the image of the Great Leader watching as the accused are led to the slaughterhouse sounds fresh and authentic. Maybe that is why they did not take Markish immediately, as they did Yasensky, but only ten years later. Or maybe poetry was more highly regarded in the Cheka than prose.

People's artist Moskvín: THE PEOPLE'S COURT

*January 30.* The long-awaited sentence: thirteen men to be executed; Sokolnikov, Radek, Arnold got ten years' imprisonment; Stroilov, eight years.

Try to figure the logic of the proletarian court! Radek, on whom so much spleen and ink had been spent, had his life spared, and other practically unknown people got the ax. To give this exercise a religious flavor: approve because it is absurd. They approved.

*From Radek's last words:*

The investigators did not torment us, we tormented them . . . I am guilty of one more thing. For a long while I did not denounce

Bukharin. I waited for him to give honest testimony to Soviet authority. I did not want to take him bound to the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs . . . I refer to those who were associated with us. Go with the guilty . . . I want before I die to be of some use.

Someone else can comment on that.

From a poem by V. Lebedev-Kumach:

*Thank You Proletarian Court*

Shaking with indignation  
the nation tolled as an alarm bell.  
Thank you, warriors of the Commissariat,  
Guardians of the great republic.

In the title there is gratitude to the court, but in the text to the NKVD. But then everyone knows they are one and the same thing.

HEROES OF THE SOVIET UNION A. Liapidevsky, V. Molokov, I. Doronin, M. Vodopianov: "They got what they deserved!"

People's actress Korchagina-Aleksandrovskaja: "I applaud the proletarian court."

Professors Speransky, Pavlovsky, and others: "Truly popular justice."

An obvious and instructive example of civic duty. These learned men were not too lazy to speak out for the second time in the course of this single trial.

L. Feuchtwanger, FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THIS TRIAL: "We can say with satisfaction that the trial did shed light on the motivations of the accused to confess. Those who truly strive to determine the truth, will find it easier thereby to evaluate these confessions as evidence."

There was no evidence, but in their absence they got along with confessions. The honorable writer had not made a discovery. This is Vyshinsky's contribution to jurisprudence. As far as the motives behind the confessions are concerned, they should not be sought in the huge hall of the House of Unions, but in the comfortable offices of the Lubianka investigators. We need not doubt that had Feuchtwanger wound up there, he could have told the court anything they wanted, even to admit that he was Hitler's adoptive father.

*February 1.* Announcement of a meeting, which took place on January 30 on Red Square. Some 200,000 people attended and heard speeches by N. S. Khrushchev, N. M. Shvernink, Academician Komarov, and others.

Everyone, of course, approves and welcomes.

In Leningrad a meeting on Uritsky Square attended by 100,000.

V. Chizhevsky: THE FIRST SOVIET STRATOPLANE. The idea of taking people to the North Pole by stratoplane was mentioned.

An All-union census of cattle would take place February 1.

The country is slowly getting back to normal.

*February 2.* An order of the TSIK and SNK "On increasing the pensions of invalids of the Civil War." They took care of the enemies and took care of the people. The pensions were not extraordinary, however. Invalids of group I would receive 65 rubles per month. That would only buy 5-1/2 pounds of butter or ten bottles of vodka.

OUR REPLY TO THE ENEMIES: STAKHANOVITE LABOR

*February 4.* Lead article: "Soviet Statehood Is Strengthened."

*February 5.* N. Krylenko's article: "Enemy of the People Trotsky"

The last spontaneous response to the trial.

We beg the reader's pardon for dragging all this material in front of him. Without it, however, much of what happened is completely incomprehensible. We would contend that without this general support much of it would not have happened.

The two trials were undoubtedly important events in themselves. At the same time they were dress rehearsals for the main event of 1937, the trial of the officers, an event that had catastrophic consequences for the nation. For that reason we will describe the months that remained until the trial of Tukhachevsky and his comrades in the same fashion.

*February 11.* Pushkin celebrations in the Bolshoi theater were attended by Stalin and his disciples.

A. Svanidze: "On the question of Hittites and their kinship with Georgian tribes."

*February 18.* An order of the SNK about scholarly degrees and titles.

*February 19.* An official announcement: YESTERDAY AT 5:30 PM G. K. ORDZHONIKIDZE DIED UNEXPECTEDLY. A photo of the Great Leader at the grave. The paper carried a black border, and again on the twentieth and twenty-first. M. Tukhachevsky's article: "The Commander-in-Chief of Heavy Industry." Many other articles about the deceased.

They got rid of Ordzhonikidze, but unlike Stalin's other victims, he was buried with suitable pomp.

*February 26.* Mezhlauk appointed People's Commissar of Heavy Industry in place of Ordzhonikidze. Not a word about the TSK plenum beginning that day.

*March 4.* Major Spirin's NONSTOP FLIGHT AROUND THE WORLD

*March 6.* Information about the TSK plenum, which met February 26 to March 5. Its agenda: (1) on Party work in elections, (2) economic Party-building, (3) on the anti-Party activities of Bukharin and Rykov (expelled from the Party).

A resolution on Zhdanov's report on Party work.

*March 11.* Zhdanov's report of February 26 at the TSK plenum.

*March 13.* TWENTY YEARS FROM THE DAY OF THE FALL OF THE MONARCHY.

*March 14.* M. Moskalev, BUKHARIN AND RYKOV'S FIGHT AGAINST THE PARTY IN 1917: "These men . . . turned out to be agents of the fascist bourgeoisie."

*March 17.* A meeting of the Moscow Party activists. Khrushchev's report: "Some directors and even some commissars think that there was no wrecking." He reported Stalin's speech at the plenum.

*March 18.* People's commissariats' activists on the plenum.

*March 20.* L. Feuchtwanger: JEWS IN THE USSR AND IN FASCIST GERMANY. "I experience the greatest comfort and relief when one compares events in Germany with the fate of Jews in the USSR."

*March 21.* Party activists' meeting in Leningrad. Report by Zhdanov.

*March 23.* Moscow prepares to receive Volga water.

*March 29.* Stalin's speech at the plenum March 3. Yesterday the speech had been broadcast on the radio; today it would be repeated twice more.

*April 1.* Stalin's concluding remarks at the plenum March 5.

Now the people knew that terrorists and wreckers were not isolated individuals, monsters, and renegades, but a massive natural phenomenon.

Professor E. Tarle: "Espionage and diversion as a continuation of politics of the bourgeois state." Progressive scholars were always available.

*April 2.* Lead article: WE WILL MAKE THE PARTY SLOGAN LIVE. "The nature of Bolshevism abhors idleness just as physical nature abhors a vacuum."

VI. Sorin: THE STRUGGLE OF BUKHARIN AND RYKOV AGAINST THE PARTY OF LENIN-STALIN (historical essay)

THE VICTORY OF THE SOVIET SCHOOL OF MUSIC: D. Oistrakh, E. Gilels, M. Kozolupova.

*April 4.* A report on the removal of People's Commissar of Communications G. G. Iagoda from his duties in connection with the discovery



of malfeasance of a criminal nature. "The case has been turned over to the investigative authorities."

The post of Commissar of Communications truly was fatal. Rykov held it until he turned out to be anti-Party. Yagoda replaced him for a few months and got involved in a criminal case (later it turned out to be much worse). Ai-yai! Despite all those years he ran the OGPU and NKVD. Army Commander I. A. Khalepsky would be appointed, and it would cost him his head, but this time quietly.

*April 11. A guilty plea:* "Recently the criminal investigation department in Tbilisi rounded up more than one hundred recidivists. Many of them were employed. Juveniles were sent to children's colonies."

Such an idyll! By now they didn't bother with the criminals: they were "socially close" to the Kremlin's bosses. And why should they overburden the camps and prisons?

*April 21. V. Molotov: OUR TASKS IN THE STRUGGLE WITH TROTSKYITES AND OTHER WRECKERS, DIVERSIONISTS, AND SPIES.*

*April 23. Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Ezhov on the Moscow-Volga Canal.*

*April 29. On lowering the retail price of industrial goods*

*May 1. A. Vyshinsky TWO SYSTEMS—TWO DEMOCRACIES:* "Proletarian democracy is *always higher* than bourgeois democracy, representing the next higher step in the development of democratism."

Precisely, *representing*. . . .

*May 8. V. Antonov-Saratovsky: ON SEVERAL METHODS OF WRECKING ON THE JURIDICAL FRONT:* "Workers in justice, called to struggle with the enemies of the people, . . . have overlooked enemies in their own field."

*May 11. On this day MARSHAL TUKHACHEVSKY WAS RELEASED FROM HIS DUTIES AS FIRST DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COMMISSAR OF DEFENSE AND APPOINTED COMMANDER OF THE VOLGA MILITARY DISTRICT. No announcement was made.*

*May 17. Lead article: SOVIET LAW IS INVIOLEABLE*

*May 22. ON MAY 21 ELEVEN BRAVE SONS OF THE SOCIALIST MOTHERLAND LANDED AT THE NORTH POLE. THE POLE IS TAKEN BY US!*

*M. Vodopianov: BOLSHEVIKS AT THE POLE*

*May 23. Lead article: BOLSHEVIK ROMANTICISM*

Seven issues of the paper, May 22–29, were filled with the assault on the North Pole. Meanwhile, on May 26, Marshal Tukhachevsky was

arrested; other military commanders were arrested in the same days.

Iakir, Uborevich, and Primakov were seized on May 30 and 31 on their way to Moscow for the meeting of the Military Council. The meeting of the Military Council took place at the Commissariat of Defense, June 1–4. Nothing was said in the newspapers.

*June 3.* Workers of the Bolshoi Theater decorated.

*June 4.* Decorations for Music teachers: Stoliarsky, Iampolsky, Tseitlin, Gnesina, and others. Laureates of musical competitions: David Oistrakh, Emil and Liza Gilels, Busia Goldshtein, Marina Kozolupova, Iakov Flier, Abram Diakov.

*June 5.* Lead article: POLITICAL AND MORAL RELIABILITY OF OUR CADRES. It told how Soviet citizens were recruited by foreign residents. The conclusion: "Bolsheviks cannot be frightened. Fighting fearlessly with the enemies of the people, Bolsheviks direct all the strength of the dictatorship of the proletariat to the destruction of double-dealers, spies, and diversionists, tearing out every last rootlet and seedling."

Plenum of the TSK KP/b/Ukraine: a new Politburo was elected, this time without Yakir.

Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Leningrad Soviet: "Expel Sveshnikov, *Primakov*, and Vasiliev from the Executive Committee as unmasked enemies of the people."

*June 6.* Moscow Provincial Party Conference. Khrushchev opened the meeting: The work of the Moscow city conference had just been completed, including elections to the city committee in which trusted, dedicated Bolsheviks were elected. However, one Trotskyite traitor also became a member of the city committee, the betrayer of the Motherland, the enemy of the people Gamarnik. This fact shows once more that the enemy evilly conceals himself.

Nikita Sergeevich put it very adroitly: trusted Bolsheviks were *elected*, but the enemy of the people Gamarnik *became* a member of the city committee.

*June 8.* Lead article: GUARD STATE SECRETS AT SACRED MOSCOW PARTY CONFERENCE. S. M. Budenny told "of the foul work of spies and diversionists among the Trotskyites and rightists."

*June 9.* IN THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSARS OF THE USSR: on criminal responsibility for shortage of THREAD.

The government is always thinking of the needs of the people!

THE MOSCOW CONFERENCE: Member of the Moscow Military Dis-

trict Council Troyanker informed "on attempts by spies and traitors to weaken the might of the country. . . . The vile double-dealer *Gamarnik* carried on wrecking work. . . ."

*June 10.* Lead article: BOLSHEVIK UNITY AND SOLIDARITY

Dm. Kutuzov: AGAINST THE FALSIFICATION OF HISTORY. Radek and Tarle's views on Napoleon.

Medical Society held in shame the rapist and sadist Pletnev. In 1938 Pletnev would be a defendant in the Bukharin-Rykov trial.

*June 11.* Lead article: METALLURGY ON THE OFFENSIVE

In the second column, IN THE PROCURACY OF THE USSR: "The case of those arrested at various times by the organs of the NKVD: Tukhachevsky, Yakir, Uborevich, Kork, Eideman, Feldman, Primakov, and Putna." (We include the full text of the announcement in the chapter, "Assembly of Nikolskaia Street.")

The editors objected that Tarle was associated with Radek and called a falsifier. Tarle was no Marxist, but his book was good.

Apparently Stalin called. He liked the book, and Napoleon even more.

The Basque soccer team came to Moscow.

*June 12.* Lead article: A DESTRUCTIVE BLOW TO FASCIST RECONNAISSANCE

"We certainly *do not plan* to lose battles in the war, into which fascism with all its strength and means is trying to draw us. To the contrary, the enemy who attacks us will be beaten on *his* territory to complete destruction."

THE COURT'S SENTENCE—AN ACT OF HUMANITY. Announcement of the sentence: ALL TO BE EXECUTED

WORKERS OF MOSCOW'S PLANTS AND FACTORIES UNANIMOUSLY APPROVE

The ball-bearing plant: LET FASCISM'S SCOUTS TREMBLE

The Kuibyshev electric plants: THERE COULD BE NO OTHER SENTENCE

The Lepse factory: THE SENTENCE TESTIFIES TO OUR MIGHT AND TO YOUR MADNESS AND INHUMANITY!

"Dynamo": PUNISHMENT DESERVED

"Kalibr": AND IN THE FUTURE MERCILESSLY DESTROY ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE; THE INTELLIGENTSIA WILL NOT LAG BEHIND THE AUTHORITIES

People's artist L. M. Leonidov: SHOOTING IS THE ONLY WAY TO DEAL WITH SPIES

Architect N. Ia. Kolli: a just sentence

Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (V. Komarov, N. Gorbunov): GIVE THEM A SHAMEFUL DEATH

Calm down, old men. They are already dead, your defenders. Writers: WE DEMAND SPIES BE SHOT! TOGETHER WITH THE PEOPLE IN ONE ANGRY VOICE WE SAY—DO NOT LET ENEMIES OF THE SOVIET UNION LIVE

Stavsky, Lakhuti, Vs. Ivanov, Vyshnevsky, Fadeev, Leonov, Malyshkin, Panferov, Novikov-Priboi, Fedin, Pavlenko, Sholokhov, A. Tolstoy, Tikhonov, Pogodin, D. Bedny, Gladkov, Bakhmetev, Trenev, Surkov, Bezymensky, Ilienkov, Iudin, Kirpotin, Mikitenko, Serafimovich, Kirilenko, Lugovsky, Selvinsky, Golodny, Pasternak, Shaginian, Karaeva, Makarenko, Gidash, Bekher, Vainer, Volf, Slonimsky, Lavrenev, Prokofev, N. Aseev, and others.

Passionate greetings to Soviet writers—valiant Chekists of the pen! Russians, forget none of those who speak and write in your name! Academician S. Vavilov expressed the unanimous opinion of the collective of the Optical Institute: “Having demanded merciless revenge. . . .” A meeting of the workers of the Second Clinical Hospital of the First Medical Institute: TREMBLE YOU SCUM!

*June 14.* Lead article: OUR LAND IS SACRED AND INVIOLEABLE

“Defeat is not our lot; we can only expect victory. . . . The bloody Marlboroughs of fascism cannot set one foot on Soviet soil.”

ORDER OF PEOPLE’S COMMISSAR VOROSHILOV:

June 1–4 the Military Council of the People’s Commissariat of Defense met in the presence of members of the government. My report of the discovery by the NKVD of a traitorous, counterrevolutionary, fascist organization was heard. . . . The final goal of that gang was to liquidate by any means the Soviet order in our country, to destroy Soviet authority, to overthrow the workers-peasants’ government and reestablish in the USSR the yoke of landlords and industrialists. . . .

Logical and therefore convincing: first liquidate the order, then destroy the authority, after which there is nothing left to do but to reestablish the yoke. . . .

M. I. Ulianova died

K. Volsky: Black Friday for Fascist Intelligence

“ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE UNION CURSE THEM,” wrote



young women from the *kolkhoz* sanatorium in Gurzuf.

Academician I. Orbeli: THEIR DESTRUCTION IS OUR SACRED DUTY. This was a man of enormous culture, director of the Hermitage Museum.

Academician S. Vavilov: HISTORY CANNOT BE TURNED BACK

Sergei Ivanovich, you are better at optics, but all the same . . . be president of the Academy.

A. Tolstoy: TO THE MOTHERLAND: Vigilance, vigilance! "Stavrogin was a potential Trotskyite. . . . As if every citizen who did not love the Motherland were a Trotskyite, diversionist, and spy. Yes, it is like that. Such is the form of our revolution. . . ."

Yes, Count, such is the form of *your* revolution. After it, every citizen becomes a diversionist and a spy. No need for participal constructions. And concerning Stavrogin, you have made an error. On January 26 of this year you were gracious enough to say that Trotsky was Stavrogin. By the way, the government values your services. You will be needed for the investigation of the murder of Polish officers in Katyn forest.

Academician N. I. Vavilov (among others): HONOR AND PRAISE TO THE GLORIOUS WORKERS OF THE NKVD!

You lick their heels in vain, Nikolai Ivanovich, all the same they will kill you.

N. Tikhonov: IF THE EIGHT SPIES HAD NOT BEEN KILLED, HOW MANY VICTIMS WOULD THEY HAVE TAKEN FROM THE RANKS OF THE DEFENDERS OF FREEDOM.

Obviously the poet Tikhonov holds to that view to this time. In any case he has not found an opportunity to publicly repudiate his words.

P. Markish: HENCEFORTH WE SHALL BE LORDS OF BATTLE:

We yoked mountain peaks to mountain peaks.

We stretched our power to the clouds, to the winds.

Where needed, valleys stretch.

Where needed, peaks tower to the skies.

Translated (from Yiddish into Russian) by D. Brodsky

Our people remember only too well what happened when Markish's masters became the lords of battle in place of Tukhachevsky and Yakir. But the flight of fantasy concerning the government's leadership of nature is splendid. Even Aleksander Khristoforovich Benkendorf would have envied that.

THE ARTISTS AND SCULPTORS OF MOSCOW JOIN THEIR ANGER TO  
THE ANGER OF MILLIONS OF WORKERS OF THE SOVIET UNION

People's artist Khmelev: ETERNAL SHAME AND DAMNATION TO  
THEM.

People's artist Tarasova: DESERVED PUNISHMENT BEFELL THE  
TRAITORS OF THE MOTHERLAND

*June 20.* THE FLIGHT OF CHKALOV-BAIDUKOV-BELIAKOV FROM  
MOSCOW TO AMERICA VIA THE NORTH POLE HAS BEGUN

*June 21.* THE FLIGHT SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED

*June 28.* PARTICIPANTS OF NORTH POLE EXPEDITION DECORATED

This ends our show. In the prologue and epilogue feats of aviation were effectively employed—to the North Pole and across it. The audience departed to go about their daily routines. But the seeds of hate and violence implanted in their souls bore superabundant fruit. Denunciations, attacks, sentences, executions, camps, and most of all fear became part of their daily lives—withering, all-consuming fear, leading to madness, to loss of humanity. What had earlier been the thoroughly camouflaged domain of separate groups and classes splashed over and flowed to all ends of the Soviet land, became the very flesh of the nation's being. In a short time by the efforts of the domestic devil and his cohorts both active and passive, the country was bled dry and demoralized. Deprived of its best defenders, it became a tantalizing object for a foreign conquerer. He did not wait long.

From these newspaper excerpts it is obvious that Stalin did not act alone but with numerous supporters, or more accurately, accomplices. These were not only the direct accomplices (executors) from the punitive, Party, and other organs, but also those who are usually called "society": the more active scientists, workers, peasants, artists. In the USSR this public replaces the people in most social processes; they willingly and garrulously speak on behalf of the people and instead of them. Stalin, like any other dictator, could propose all sorts of far-reaching plans, but without the broad support of society he would not have been able to carry out a hundredth part of them.

Because of special Russian conditions our society has an elitist nature. Not all the people are interested in politics and actively engaged in it. In the Soviet Union it is those people who have achieved visible success or influence in their various professions who make up society:

scientists with international reputations, famous actors and writers, highly skilled workers, decorated flyers, heroes of the war, etc. We leave aside the question of the authenticity of their merits; it is enough that they have distinguished themselves from their colleagues.

The role of Russian society is different from that of the West. Ours cannot actively influence government policy. It is meant solely to publicly approve the acts of the state, certainly not to criticize them. But even in this role they have a powerful weapon. A man who is permitted only to clap can, without breaking any rules, do nothing at all; he can remain silent even if he has no possibility of protesting. This form of disapproval is allowed by the Soviet regime. It remains to be explained why society during the period under discussion did not use it. We will examine this behavior not from the heights of general human morality but by taking into account the opportunities and characteristics of the environment in which this society had to operate.

Despotic powers try to remove from their subjects the opportunity to express personal opinions and, alas, they succeed too often at it. They want even more, of course, to have every act of the authorities approved by the population and their representatives. In this undertaking the situation of the leaders is less secure and their success less complete than they would like.

This is not surprising. To keep those who disagree from speaking out, they are suppressed: deprived of forums, fired from their jobs, put in prison, shot. To convert the unbelievers—or at least to get their public approval—the authorities must resort to persuasion, to agitation. It could be no other way.

Of course, the methods of persuasion can be extremely rough and aggressive, or they might be dominated by threats. However, most of the time it is not necessary to actually carry out the threats, and this is only natural. In Russia the people have always been silent. In other words, the overwhelming majority prefer not to discover what their relations are to the acts of the authorities or to the authorities themselves. There is nothing to be done about that. The leaders have always been content with this secretiveness, silence, and insufficient awareness. It is impossible to prosecute every citizen who says nothing or who yells “hurrah” too quietly. It is physically impossible to find enough oppressors, persecutors, and punishers.

There is another way to control: try to influence the representatives of the people and put their opinions forth as the voice of the whole

people. That is how it is done in Russia. And it is mainly done by persuasion, suggestion, bribery, deceit, and flattery—not violence. We do not need to mention any of the above; it is enough to point out that there is no evidence of consistent coercion to make public denunciations. Who would have dared, without dissembling, to say that he was forced at the point of a pistol or the threat of imprisonment to write a letter to the paper approving the execution of Tukhachevsky and Yakir? On the contrary, instances are known, they are common enough, when respected citizens sweated and toiled to praise Stalin's acts—and did not lose their heads.

The writers Leonid Leonov and Konstantin Fedin, together with other brothers of the pen, approved the execution of the military leaders, while Mikhail Prishvin and Konstantin Paustovsky found the strength to say nothing—and remained free and ended their lives with clean consciences and reputations. Names dear to our hearts, like Mikhail Bulgakov, Osip Mandelshtam and Andrei Platonov are also absent from the list of the bloodthirsty.

The writer Bruno Yasensky wrote a series of articles filled with explanations for the executions. He soon died of starvation in the camps. Poet Perets Markish wrote verses, which can only be called cannibalistic, but a dozen years later he was shot down by Stalin's police. Servility to the executioners did not guarantee personal safety.

The motives for cooperation were various. Some were carried along by the herd of maddened rhinoceroses, the timid gave in to fear, too many were simply afraid to think. Only a few maintained their humanity and, even if they stumbled from time to time, did not fall entirely.

How many souls are sickened to find among the pack of literary scum the name of the great Pasternak. In the 1950s the poet claimed that his signature had been printed in the paper without his permission.<sup>2</sup> It was then that he published his novel, which has become the most valuable testimony of the epoch. Aleksander Tvardovsky, after he and others had unleashed the smear campaign against Pasternak, felt deep remorse at his death and did a great deal to help Russian literature. He gave Solzhenitsyn to his readers and bravely defended him until he (Tvardovsky) lost his editorship.

There were others, like Bulgakov and Platonov, who continued to create great literature in anonymity and poverty, unenticed by sinecures and publication. Their fate and their behavior remain a strong reproach to those who sold themselves—a denial of their shameless lie. And



then there were those who, like Mandelshtam and Pilniak, died for the right to express the truth.

What we have said about the writers could be said of other groups in society. Nor is it possible to ignore the role and the behavior of the Western intelligentsia. We cannot forget that their representatives, the most progressive, liberal, thinking, sensitive, famous, and conscientious of them, approved Stalin's crimes, regarded them with "understanding," and often welcomed them. More than that, they viciously attacked anyone in the West who tried to expose the Soviet terror.

We will not spare the room to name all the Stalinist apologists among the Western intelligentsia. There were Romain Rolland, Bernard Shaw, J. P. Sartre, Lion Feuchtwanger, Henri Barbusse, Bertolt Brecht, Theodore Dreiser, John Pritt, Pierre Daix,<sup>3</sup> but this is far from a complete list; it includes only some of the most famous names. We have neither the time nor the desire to try to completely explain their shameful behavior. We do not believe that they could not have known the truth. If Andre Gide could renounce the cause, if Koestler and Orwell could understand, then so could the others. The greatest Russian philosopher of the twentieth century, Nikolai Berdiaev, who lived there in the West, wrote in 1937 fifteen years after he had emigrated, "The disgraceful staging of the Soviet trials alone, in which everyone confesses just like everyone else, can inspire disgust for the whole system."<sup>4</sup>

Leaders of the foreign communist parties were active collaborators with Stalin and sent hundreds of their Party comrades to the cellars of the NKVD: M. Thorez, P. Togliatti, H. Pollitt, E. Dennis, W. Pieck, W. Ulbricht, B. Bierut, M. Rakoczy, G. Dmitrov, K. Gottwald.

Why did people here in the Soviet Union denounce others and carry on? It seems to us that the primary motivations were baseness and selfishness. We will try to explain.

Let us look briefly at the conditions of power. The authorities need the unanimous support of society, but that is devilishly hard to obtain. There is, however, another way. They can bestow the title of representatives of the people only on those who agree to approve. The rest they can get along without, though they will keep their eyes on them. Let the stubborn ones build the bridges, grow the grain, sing the arias at the opera. The state would not survive without the bridge-builders, or the grain growers, or the singers in any case. But these must not be permitted to be silent on behalf of the people, only for themselves. It is not a

problem that the silent number in the millions. Silence is frightening and significant only when it is universal, but in Russia it is covered over by the moving voices of those who do approve; and they are sufficiently plentiful.

Where then was the selfishness? It was most apparent. Those who loudly (we are not discussing sincerity) supported the authorities were reckoned among the elect. They got their share of honors, medals, titles, and material goods. They were permitted to speak for the whole nation, which, of course, flattered their egos and their hunger for recognition. If they were asked for support, they were needed. The Motherland needed them. These simplehearted people easily confused the Motherland with the government, just as the state put them in place of the people. More practically, the massive slaughter cleared the way for careers, removed competitors, freed places at the trough. It was an extremely risky game, and for millions it had a fatal ending; but greed seldom mates with sagacity.

We turn to baseness. Most of the approvers knew that with their signatures they signed death sentences; on behalf of the people they consecrated the axes in the executioners' hands. They took upon themselves the right to predetermine the decisions of these make-believe courts. They usually had no proof whatsoever, as was the case with the officers. This means they sent to their deaths people of whose guilt they were at the very least uncertain. In such cases the fair judge—every normal person—must refrain from carrying out the sentence, especially if the sentence is extreme and irrevocable.

They soothed their consciences with justifications like the following: "Even if the accused are innocent (more often they said, they must be guilty of something; the authorities wouldn't try people who were absolutely innocent), they are nonetheless doomed. The authorities are too powerful and merciless. I cannot change their fate. Better to sign—it is just a formality—and then they will leave me in peace."

Such subterfuges do not alter the case. To protest against repression in such cases was suicide; such at least was the common assumption. That would be heroic; and no one has the right to demand it of another. However, it is the duty of every civilized person to maintain his silent dignity and not to join the armed mob in its attack on a single unarmed individual. Whoever for the sake of personal gain or comfort cheers on the murderers is a villain, an accomplice in the crime, and a criminal himself.

Whatever aims and methods of state revolution were envisioned by the Stalinists, it could not have happened without broad social support. That support gave strength and scope to the repressions. It not only allowed the repression to continue, but gave them the appearance of legality, justified them in the eyes of our people and the whole world. It shut the mouths and bound the hands of Stalin's opponents, stifled their will to resist. They felt their isolation and helplessness not only before Stalin's punitive machine, but before the *people*.

In the final analysis the historical success of Stalin's career is based on the large number of academicians and weavers, novelists and lathe operators, surgeons and farmers, who were ready to serve him in crime. He entangled them in mutual responsibility for mutually spilled blood and bribed them with special rations and fancy apartments, which were all the more attractive against the background of national poverty. He freed their consciences of doubts and responsibility, taking that burden upon his own conscience, but he never possessed a conscience. They followed him and made him their idol, a model to emulate. If they did not resemble their Great Leader in every way, it was not for want of trying, but simply because not everyone was able to rise to such heights of depravity and perfidy. Soon they were bound fast to Stalin's chariot by invisible chains stronger than any metal. Scraps of these chains still whip about the heads and backs of the people.

They beat their own people without pity, drowned them in horror and blood, and at the same time prepared them for a worse fate. Responsibility for the victims and the destruction of the military lie entirely on Stalin and on those who helped him, zealously or reluctantly, silently or with joyous squeals. Those who clapped their bloody hands and gasped in slavish ecstasy at the destruction of all that was best in the Red Army in June 1937 brought on the events June 1941 with the mountains of corpses, the shame of retreat, and the scorched earth of the Motherland.

One need not be a genius to understand that the Army is different from the Party and other political institutions. If the politicians fight and scratch and bite for positions and influence, those are the natural rules of the game. People joined the Party to get power. It was all the same to the country when one ambitious and incompetent secretary or people's commissar replaced another. One was as bad as the other. It is not the same in the Army, which exists to defend the Fatherland; or at least so it is normally supposed. Therefore when the Army, which is



not participating in that struggle for power, is attacked, nothing good can come of it.

Justice demands that we note that not everyone did remain silent. It is said that Rudzutak, Eikhe, Ordzhonikidze, Postyshev, and a number of others did protest the massive slaughter of the cadres. Kirov and Kuibyshev had already expressed their disagreement with extreme forms of terror. It is significant that they acted for utilitarian rather than humanitarian reasons. But that belated and puny protest had no effect, primarily because it was kept secret within the ruling circles. They did not have the courage to share their alarm with the country. Nor did they have the moral right. The memory was still vivid of how these same comrades had smashed the oppositionists, pitilessly destroyed the kulaks. Now they had become the oppositionists and would share their natural fate.

The larger part of society did not understand the practical harm of the purges. Having scorned the elementary feelings of justice and compassion, they made speeches, they scoffed at the open graves and danced at the funeral feast of their best defenders. Shame on you, you blind and venal creatures. You signed your servile, cannibalistic letters with the blood of your countrymen. You brought unprecedented sorrow upon Russia.

These people still insisted that they believed: believed in the historical rightness of Stalin, believed in the guilt of his victims. However, faith and sincerity of motives are deeply personal things and are not suitable justification for social behavior. Arkady Belinkov said it beautifully:

Sincerity has no bearing on what a person does and cannot serve as a justification for it. That Genghis Khan or Hitler sincerely believed in his misanthropic ideas and following them tried to destroy everything he could get his hands on, makes their crime no less. Man must be sincere. But this may not be the only virtue to justify his doubtful or evil acts. Sincerity does not replace other virtues. Sometimes it may replace stupidity. But it must never replace reason.<sup>5</sup>

Along with everything else, what could we say about the mental capacity of those people who for so many years trusted Stalin and accepted without proof everything he told them? What can be said of their consciences?



Chosen to be the pride of the nation, they became its damnation. The justifications of the menials, who have outlived their master, sound vile and false. "We believed. . . . We did not know. . . . They made us. . . ."

Were the brother Academicians Vavilov as trusting in physics and genetics, or did they subject every little fact there to repeated and detailed confirmation? If they did not care to search out every truth in societal matters, why didn't they prefer to remain silent?

Did they not know? Raskolnikov could know, knew and wrote about it. Pilniak wrote about the liquidation of Frunze in 1926. The rest were smart enough and had enough information to understand how the NKVD fabricated cases. If they did not know, it was only because they chose not to know the truth.

"They made us . . ." Another lie. Why, then, so many years later when the cult was dismantled did none of them explain how they were made to act—or why they did not renounce their own denunciations?

Soviet society, the intelligentsia in particular, knew. They had to know, for they took upon themselves the expression of public opinion. They preferred to act otherwise. They licked the bloody hands of the tyrant, and he in his turn admitted them to the trough, awarded them hastily contrived titles and distributed coupons for immortality.

Every educated, intelligent man bears inescapable responsibility. It is not a material debt. It does not come from the duty to repay society for his education. The intelligent man must see farther than others and use his knowledge for the good of mankind. To tell the people the truth, to warn them of impending disaster, to point out their errors and sins, to work to make life better, cleaner, more just—that is the calling and position of the intelligentsia. That is the responsibility of the seeing to the blind, the strong to the infirm, of men to women, adults to children.

Not understanding this responsibility or scorning it—whether from fear, selfishness, or thoughtlessness, it is all the same—one has no right to call himself an intellectual. More than that, such a person is morally and socially defective. No system runs all by itself. Why is it we always have a surfeit of people to carry out various injustices and abominations and so few for good, honest work?

Let the people know the names of their malefactors—not for revenge and abuse, but for all time to learn the terrible lesson.

# Epilogue

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## The Bloody Hangover

They finally won. They defeated themselves and their people.

—Korzhavin



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## 23 Conspiracy Against Peace

Stalin, in his report to the Eighteenth Congress in March 1939, said:

We do not fear the threats of the aggressor and are prepared to answer double blow for blow the instigators of war, who are trying to violate the inviolability of the Soviet borders. We must be careful and not let our country be drawn into conflicts by the warmongers, who are used to stoking the fire with others' arms. . . .

Or, for example, take Germany. They gave her Austria—gave her the Sudetenland, left Czechoslovakia to its own fate, ignoring all obligations, and then began to shout lies in the press about “the weakness of the Russian Army,” about the “decay of Russian aviation,” about “disorders” in the Soviet Union, pushing the Germans farther east. They promised Germany easy pickings, saying again and again: you just start a war with the Bolsheviks and everything will be just fine . . . that looks a lot like incitement to the aggressor. The noise the Anglo-French and North American press made about the Soviet Union is typical. That suspicious noise seems to have been meant to anger the Soviet Union against Germany, poison the atmosphere, and provoke a conflict with Germany where there was no apparent reason for it. One might think that they gave the Germans parts of Czechoslovakia as payment for starting a war with the Soviet Union, but the Germans are refusing now to pay the IOU, making them concede more.

—Stalin, Report to the Eighteenth Congress, March 1939

The time had come to celebrate their most recent triumphs, but the joy of celebration had a bitter aftertaste. No, the blood they had spilled and the injustices they had done did not keep Stalin and his valiant comrades from enjoying the fruits of their victory. But they were disturbed by conditions in Europe, which in 1938 smelled strongly of a new war.

The NKVD still worked hard at killing the military leadership while the need for a strong army became ever more vital and immediate. Hitler began his conquests. In 1938 Austria and Czechoslovakia fell.



Too late Western leaders recognized the suicidal uselessness of the Munich policy. Taking advantage of their shortsightedness and selfishness, Germany had shaken off the chains of Versailles and broken the ring of little countries that France had taken such pains to erect around her.

France was sure of its military might. England for many years had not seriously prepared for war. While Germany had day by day made ever more brazen overtures toward Poland, the Western Allies had fussed about. Finally appeasement was replaced by intimidation. The guarantees of inviolability, which England and France hastened to give the Poles, were not only a bluff, but also an unwitting provocation. Since they had no borders with Poland, the Allies could not physically come to its aid. Moreover, their armed forces were not prepared to do so. The Polish army was fairly large, but its organization was outdated and it did not have sufficient modern weapons. The Anglo-French coalition was similarly weak. They were also very short of tanks and planes.

Hitler felt tempted to show up the rash acts of the Allies. He understood that so favorable a military situation could not last forever. England was already beginning to modernize its army. Their solid economic and engineering potential would enable them to make up quickly for lost time. Moreover, behind them stood the American colossus. Therefore, the best time to attack Poland was immediately, but only under the condition that Russia did not interfere. Hitler understood that well.

The allies realized it also. They hoped that a renewed Franco-Russian-English alliance would prevent war in Europe. In any case, they thought that if the Soviet Union joined in the guarantees for Poland, Germany would not attack. Therefore in the summer of 1939 the lines of force of European interests came together in Moscow.

The Kremlin was not unaware of this. But at the time the Soviet leadership was entirely comprised of amateurs and parvenus. All of these people were incompetent in international politics and grand strategy. Previously they had all heeded the advice of military specialists and diplomats of the Chicherin-Litvinov school. During the Great Purge, however, the staff of the People's Commissariat of Defense, the General Staff, strategic intelligence, and the diplomatic corps were all destroyed. Commissar of Foreign Affairs M. M. Litvinov, who had survived only by a miracle was in complete isolation. He was a half-

dead fish out of water, surrounded by people who all their lives had been busy with intrigues and murders, who had never been abroad, who little understood diplomacy, and who for various good reasons did not even comprehend geography.<sup>1</sup> On May 4, 1939, while policy was in the process of changing, Litvinov was retired.

The new course was worthy of the new leaders of foreign policy. Having come to the center of European attention, they quickly displayed their true nature. They wanted to know what was in it for them. It was explained to them that a war was coming and that Russia would unavoidably become involved, and they thought of the immediate advantages to be gained, first of all through territorial acquisitions. (Here and below when speaking of territorial expansion, we will not discuss ethical aspects or questions of international law. We will be interested only in examining national expediency: how these annexations affected the defense capabilities of the country.)

A. A. Zhdanov, who had risen quickly to power, became the architect of foreign policy. Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars V. M. Molotov, who jointly headed the diplomatic apparatus after Litvinov, took all practical concerns upon himself. Already in the spring of 1939 Zhdanov had expressed the opinion that Germany was a worthy partner and long-term ally. Their political structure, that is, Hitlerism, was an internal German matter, and Zhdanov felt we would be wiser to abandon our one-sided orientation in foreign affairs. Litvinov, who had worked hard for an Anglo-Soviet rapprochement, was opposed to this policy, but there was nothing he could do. He was fortunate not to be denounced as an agent of British imperialism. He had after all lived many years in London and married an English woman.

Zhdanov's idea fell on fertile soil. Stalin had already dropped a few curtseys to Hitler in his speech before the Seventeenth Congress (April 26, 1934): "As everyone knows, during the first imperialist war they also tried to destroy one of the great powers, Germany, and get rich at her expense. And what came of it? They did not destroy Germany, but sowed in Germany such hatred toward the victors, made the soil so fertile for revanche, that to this day they cannot, nor will they soon be able to, swallow the *disgusting gruel* they cooked up there."<sup>2</sup>

So that's what it was all about. World War I was undertaken ("the gruel cooked up") to destroy Germany and get rich at her expense. The trial in Leipzig of G. Dimitrov and his comrades had only recently

been completed, on December 23, 1933. The accused, who were Communists, were acquitted for lack of evidence; but in the sentence the Communist Party of Germany was blamed for the burning of the Reichstag.

Stalin did not say a word in his report about that very important trial, while at the same time he agreed with the Nazis' explanation of the cause of the First World War. Another part of the speech proves that the excerpt above is no accidental slip of the tongue or carelessness in the wording:

Some German politicians [read Nazis] say that the USSR is aligned today with France and Poland, that having been an opponent of the Versailles Treaty, we have become its supporter, and that change is explained by the establishment of the fascist regime in Germany. That is *not true*. Of course, we are far from celebrating the fascist regime in Germany. *But fascism is not the problem* here [we willingly believe I. V.; authors], because *fascism* in Italy, for example, did not prevent the USSR from establishing the *best* of relations with that country. Nor is the problem our *supposed* change of attitude toward the Versailles Treaty. [Listen, listen in Berlin!] It is not for us, who experienced the shame of the Brest peace, to praise the Versailles Treaty. We disapprove only insofar as the world is plunged from that treaty of peace into the abyss of another war.<sup>3</sup>

Thus he let Hitler know: we were not his enemies. Although Hitler had stuck most of the German Communists in jail, the two nations could come to an arrangement. His silence on the Leipzig trial was not accidental. Dimitrov and Tanev had been acquitted by the court, but they were kept in jail while secret negotiations were carried out. On February 15 the Soviet government decided to accept the Bulgarian Communists as Soviet subjects, and on the twenty-seventh the Gestapo flew them in a special plane to Moscow. The first contact with the new German regime had led to constructive results.

In March 1939, at the Eighteenth Congress, Stalin continued the same line. He unambiguously said that Germany and the USSR wanted the English and French ("supporters of nonintervention") to bump heads, and directed the fire of his criticism against them: "I have no intention to moralize about the policy of nonintervention, to speak of treason, of treachery, and so forth. It is naive to tell morals to people



who do not recognize human morality. Politics is politics, as the old, arch-bourgeois diplomats say. It is necessary, however, to note that the great and dangerous political game begun by the proponents of the policy of nonintervention might end for them in a serious failure."<sup>4</sup>

Thus in 1939 there loomed the possibility of reestablishing German-Soviet cooperation, which had been fairly successful in the period between Rapallo and Hitler's coming to power. There had been reciprocity in many spheres, including the military. Soviet commanders had studied at the German Academy of the General Staff, and in return the USSR had helped Germany get around the restrictive articles of the Versailles Treaty by letting them use airfields and training grounds on Soviet territory.

All of this would have been unimportant if Soviet-German rapprochement were seen as only one of several avenues for foreign policy. Unfortunately the Kremlin completely misread the situation in Europe. A prisoner of his Marxist phraseology, Stalin could only understand a united front of imperialists. From his point of view Germany and England were the same. They arranged their affairs at the expense of third countries like Czechoslovakia. (This was partly true, but a secret Anglo-German alliance existed only in Stalin's imagination; Stalin, thinking everyone was like himself, suspected everyone of boundless perfidy and treachery.)

Thus, when both sides began to flirt with Moscow, the suspicious Leader immediately smelled a conspiracy. There arose the temptation to make his secret allies bump heads, in the words of official propaganda: "to disrupt the united imperialist front against the USSR." And the desire to move the border of the USSR westward as soon as borders in Europe became unstable was called: "using the contradictions among the imperialist powers." Stalin also wanted to postpone the entrance of the USSR into the war; this had no official name, but was still the greatest foolishness since there was no one to attack: neither England, France, nor Germany had common borders with the Soviet Union, and Poland was not an aggressor. These considerations were not based on a realistic evaluation of the circumstances and poorly agreed with one another.

Greed, incompetence, and a tendency to intrigue had their effect. Stalin accepted Zhdanov's proposed alliance with Hitler, and there was no one in the country to object. The lonely voice of Litvinov, who had personal reasons to attract him to England and national motives to hate



fascism, disappeared in the cowardly silence of the People's Commissariat of Defense (Voroshilov), the General Staff (Shaposhnikov), and military intelligence (Golikov). Tukhachevsky was no longer alive, that Tukhachevsky who in 1935 had warned of the German threat and in 1936 had unequivocally told the chief of the French general staff, General Gamelin, that Hitler would eventually collide with the USSR but that he would start with France. If we suppose that Stalin had thought of an alliance with Germany before the summer of 1939, for that reason alone he would have wanted to get rid of Tukhachevsky and his comrades. For them such a course would have been unthinkable and organically unacceptable as pure treason.

There was much to be said for the choice Stalin made: traditional Bolshevik Germanophilia, the similarities of their methods of wielding power, the amazing coincidence in their propaganda apparatuses.<sup>5</sup> In the honeymoon of the alliance there was excellent mutual understanding, not only in economics and politics,<sup>6</sup> but also between the NKVD and the Gestapo.<sup>7</sup> Two other factors were of decisive importance. Hitler was more than glad to agree with Moscow's expansionist designs, while the Western Allies spoke only of how to guarantee the inviolability of the Polish state or how to create a new system of collective security. Second, the repression had seriously undermined the fighting ability of the Red Army. Stalin knew that; he could not help but see. He instinctively feared a real war. It would be much better to have the pushy Hitler as a friend and ally.

Negotiations with the English and French dragged on lethargically and without results. Finally at the end of August, during Ribbentrop's brief visit to Moscow, the Soviet-German nonaggression pact was concluded. Secret articles of the pact included agreed-upon spheres of interest or, more precisely, territorial claims. The partitioning of Poland was the main part of the deal: Hitler got the western regions of the country, Stalin the eastern. Besides that, the USSR recognized German acquisitions in Austria and Czechoslovakia; Germany recognized Soviet claims in the Baltic region. The fate of the *Rzech Pospolyta* and of peace in Europe had been decided.

Hitler was beside himself with joy: "In this way I knocked their weapons out of the hands of the western gentlemen [England and France]. We put Poland in a situation much more favorable for achieving military success. . . . Stalin writes that this policy promises much good for both countries. A gigantic turnabout in European politics."<sup>8</sup>

In September the Wehrmacht began its invasion of Poland.<sup>9</sup> England and France declared war on Germany. The Second World War had begun.

Stalin had every reason to be satisfied. Already by the second half of September, following the disastrous failures of the Polish army, the Soviet Union occupied the Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia. In the winter of 1939-40 they seized the Kola Isthmus from Finland. In the summer and fall of 1940 the three Baltic states, Bessarabia, and Northern Bukovina, taken from Rumania, were added to the USSR. Only the Finnish acquisition required actual military action; this did cost large human sacrifice, but it ended in the victory of the USSR (population 190 million) over Finland (population 4 million). The other large territories were obtained bloodlessly.

There would be no end, it seemed, to their success. By the end of 1940 France had been defeated. Germany and the Soviet Union had become the masters of the European continent. The touching union of these two great powers gave rise to the fondest hopes. In the fall of 1939 Molotov recognized Nazism as the organic ideology of the German people, against which one might polemicize, but which one must not try to combat with force of arms.<sup>10</sup> Brotherly feelings led him even further. "We believe that a strong Germany is a guarantee of peace in Europe," he declared at a session of the Supreme Soviet. Stalin, just to be safe, never did make a public apology for fascism, but to all appearances he seemed to think that everything was going well.<sup>11</sup> True, England had not yet been brought to her knees, but that was Hitler's problem. The USSR still had normal diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom, all the while carrying on hostile propaganda against the British.

If Stalin and his inner circle had been capable of sober analysis, they would at once have restrained their joy. The territorial gains were significant and had been acquired at no little cost; however, the strategic situation of the USSR had not changed for the better. It had actually worsened. We will discuss the main points.

The Red Army, or to be more accurate, what remained of it, had gone through a serious crisis. The liquidation of practically the entire higher command staff had sown uncertainty and fear among the ranks. Its fighting ability had been terribly weakened. The new command was inferior to the former in many ways—in leadership, education, and combat experience. There were no especially talented men among the

new leaders. All of them in one way or another were unprepared to hold the high posts these bloody times had forced upon them. The weakness of the command had already been apparent during the limited operations in the Far East, but they were made painfully obvious in the first serious campaign, that against Finland.

The choice of the time to begin the campaign promised nothing good. The Soviets set out to fight the Finns, who were used to the cold, in the conditions most favorable to the latter—in winter—as if they were dealing with the warmth-loving French or Italians. The strategic plan of the attack was prepared as badly as it could have been. Shaposhnikov's and Shtern's suggestion to attack across the undefended Kandalaksha region was rejected on the grounds that the terrain was too difficult for the troops to negotiate. (How could these neophyte strategists know that in modern warfare traversing difficult terrain gives the attackers a good chance to take the enemy by surprise. The Germans twice proved that with their successful attacks through the Ardennes. The magnificent success of the Belorussian operation of the Soviet Army depended on their striking a blow through a swamp.) Instead the troops were made to storm the heavily defended Mannerheim line.<sup>12</sup> The attackers' battle losses were huge. Tens of thousands who fell casualties to the cold added to the losses.

The confusion was complete. Therefore as soon as the Finnish defenses had been broken, Stalin hastened to end military operations. Since the Finnish army was still able to fight, Stalin had to be content with rather modest acquisitions.

The failure of the campaign led to changes in the Army leadership. Voroshilov was replaced as People's Commissar by S. K. Timoshenko, who was soon given the rank of marshal. Of course, it was easier to pass out marshals' batons than to raise real commanders. If the former cavalryman Timoshenko differed from Voroshilov, it was for the worse. He was even more ignorant; he had no experience in high command, nor did he possess political skills. From the beginning of the Fatherland War even Stalin noticed that.

Another fresh-baked marshal, G. I. Kulik, held the post of chief of ordnance. As a braggart and ignoramus, he was unrivaled, even in these Soviet conditions. His career advanced because Stalin had once seen him command ten smallish guns at Tsaritsyn. Kulik worked hard to destroy the accomplishments of his predecessors Tukhachevsky and Khalepsky. He did not give the troops new types of weapons, because



his own knowledge remained at the level of the Civil War. Stalin trusted him completely. Because of Kulik's opposition to it, the T-34 tank, which proved to be the best in the Second World War, almost did not become part of the Army's equipment. The People's Commissar of Combat Supplies, B. L. Vannikov, who actively fought against Kulik, wound up in the Lubianka until the war brought him justice. Vannikov was returned to his former post and earned four Hero's stars, while Kulik in the first months of fighting was demoted first to major general and later to major.

In this shake-up the experienced Shaposhnikov, through no fault of his own, lost his position as chief of General Staff. Stalin explained that although Shaposhnikov's plan had proved to be right, he had to be fired along with Voroshilov to satisfy public opinion. K. A. Meretskov occupied the vacant post. In January 1941, for no particular reason, he was replaced by G. K. Zhukov. In the year preceding the outbreak of the war the General Staff did not have stable leadership.

In the operational-tactical sphere the army was thrown backward twenty years to a linear combat disposition. The theory of deep operations was declared treasonous wrecking. Once again the cavalry dominated the military to the detriment of the armored tank and mechanized troops. In case of war the deployment of ninety-nine (!) cavalry divisions was planned. In 1936 the Germans had two-and-a-half divisions. The cavalry cost the Soviet people more than their entire system of education.

Inclusion of the various new regions in the USSR established a Soviet-German border that stretched for hundreds of kilometers. This was unquestionably a strategic disadvantage. The danger of a surprise attack by Germany increased many times. The aggressor could now at his discretion choose where along the border he would launch an attack; the defender would have to defend the whole length of the border, which required a huge number of forces. Previously, to come into contact with Soviet troops the Germans would have had to cross Poland or the Baltic countries. Under those conditions an attack could not come completely by surprise. The Red Army had a certain amount of time in which to prepare a counterstrike. Possible points for invasion could more or less be predicted.

The acquisition of the extensive security zone, which stretched to three hundred kilometers in places, complicated the Soviets' strategic position.

The position of the Red Army was further weakened by two glaring



errors of the political leadership. During the 1930s powerful defensive works, which were in no way inferior to the Maginot Line, were constructed along the old borders. Construction of a new line more nearly suited to the new borders was begun in 1940. It would have taken several years to build. Without waiting for it to be completed, however, Stalin ordered that the bunkers and weapons at the old fortifications be dismantled. The second error was associated with Stalin's fantastic literalism in matters he did not clearly understand. Basing his order on the propagandistic slogan "Do not give the enemy an inch of our land," Stalin ordered that the new defense line follow exactly the configuration of the western border. The extent of the defense line grew catastrophically because of that. Stalin absolutely refused to employ mobile defenses. No use was made of powerful natural boundaries, such as the Neman River in its middle course, the August Canal, or the Bobr River, only because they were a few dozen kilometers from the border. Twelve armies plus detached corps and divisions of the Odessa district defended the Soviet border from the Barents Sea to Bukovina. Two-thirds of the mechanized corps, those already formed and some just completing formation, were thrown in. Nonetheless, these tremendous forces did not suffice for a solid defense.

The territorial seizures of 1939 and 1940 put the Soviet Union's neighbors, which had formerly acted as buffers, into the camp of the potential enemy. This was most true of Romania and Finland. The Germans were indifferent to the annexations of Bukovina, Bessarabia, and the Kola Isthmus, although they were not agreed to in the secret articles of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Now Bucharest and Helsinki became true allies of Berlin in the coming war. Germany got new platforms from which to launch an invasion and additional manpower that it especially needed. The Romanian episode doubtless strengthened German influence in two other Balkan states, Hungary and Bulgaria.

Still Stalin's appetite continued to grow. During Molotov's visit to Berlin, the Germans suggested that the USSR join the trilateral (anti-Comintern) pact. On November 25, 1940, Stalin informed Hitler of his agreement in principle and of the conditions under which the Soviet Union would join. He asked for "the conclusion of five secret protocols":

1. Concerning Finland, with which the USSR wishes to come to an agreement without the use of force [but with the threat of force and German pressure].
2. Concerning Bulgaria, which must [not otherwise] conclude a nonaggression pact with Russia.
3. About the lease of strong points on the Bosphorus.
4. Concerning Turkey, which should be required to join the trilateral pact. If Turkey should agree to join, her borders would be guaranteed. If she refused, the diplomatic and military pressure of Germany, Italy, and Russia would be brought to bear. Japan must be made to give up its concession on Sakhalin.
5. Concerning the Russian sphere of influence south of the line Batumi-Baku.<sup>13</sup>

Hitler did not respond to these suggestions. Apparently strengthening the Soviet Union in this way did not enter into his plans. He decided to fight in the East, and less than a month later confirmed plan "Barbarossa."

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## 24 The Blindness

Our state machinery is suited for defense, not for attack. It gives us as much steadfastness as it deprives us of mobility. When we passively defend ourselves, we are stronger than we really are, for we add to our defense forces our inability to understand our powerlessness. That is, our courage is increased so that even if frightened we do not soon run away. On the contrary, attacking we act with only 10 percent of our strength. The rest is expended to get that 10 percent into motion. . . . Strength is action, not potential; when not combined with discipline, it kills itself. We are lower organisms in the international zoology: we continue to move after we have lost our head.

—Kliuchevsky

The last act of the prewar drama began at the moment of the Pyrrhic victory in the Finnish campaign. Having paired with Hitler to get the Second World War started, Stalin quite seriously counted on staying out of the main battles. He amused himself with the thought that while Germany and the West were busy destroying each other, he would snap up the tastiest morsels without risk. If he did get involved, it would be at the end, to participate in cutting up the world pie. All Soviet plans foresaw the possibility of entering the war but not before the end of 1942, when, according to Stalin's calculations, the main battles would already have been fought.

The source of the catastrophe of 1941 must be sought first of all in the absolute incompetence of the Kremlin leadership. Rarely in history has such a collection of selfish, incompetent, and simply ignorant men gathered at the feeding troughs of a great power. What were all these Stalins, Molotovs, Malenkovs, and Berias thinking about? Only about how to solidify and increase their own power. Even in June 1941, a time of mortal danger for the Motherland, they could not behave differently. While the terrified Leader drank heavily in seclusion for two weeks, Beria and Malenkov carried out a quiet coup in their narrow circle. They created the State Committee for Defense headed by the incapacitated Leader, but including only Molotov of the former members of the Politburo.

Even looking at things more calmly, it is impossible not to see that in 1940 and the first half of 1941 the Kremlin leadership was doing the same thing that the Western Allies were in 1938 and 1939: nothing, wasting time. Meanwhile, Hitler's appetite was growing daily. He went hunting through Europe looking for easy pickings and finding them. France fell. England desperately clung to its existence. Greece, Norway, Denmark, and Yugoslavia were seized.

It all meant nothing to Stalin. In Moscow they continued to lull themselves with the idiotic illusion that Germany would not try to fight a two-front war. (That was worth remembering in December 1941 when Hitler, already fighting on two fronts—and what fronts!—nonetheless declared war on the United States.) The incorrigible doctrinaires, the seminary and high school dropouts whose whole intellectual baggage consisted of ten ready formulas, had very firmly absorbed the lesson that war is a continuation of politics by other means, and economic factors play the decisive role in war (and social development). Why would Germany (population 70 million) attack the USSR (population 190 million), while they were still fighting England (population 50 million), behind whom stood the United States (population 150 million) with its huge economic potential? And the Soviet Union's productive relations were more progressive than theirs, not to mention our social structure. They must have learned something from history. Bismarck taught the Germans not to meddle in the East; Zhdanov especially emphasized that. No, under no circumstances would the Germans attack, thought the Russians. They must not. And if they dared (here the voice hardens), they would find their graves in our immense land. Like Napoleon. That they had learned. The Soviets were too busy to remember that Bonaparte had reached Moscow and had spent some time there. They did not want to think the possibility all the way through; but they did let Hitler reach the very walls of the capital—probably so as not to ruin the historical analogy.

A country must prepare for war, and in an orderly, thoughtful fashion. Therefore a plan was approved for putting industry on a war footing. The completion of the project was foreseen in the end of 1942. What was the hurry? Therefore Malenkov did not transmit to the Army's political workers directives for immediate combat readiness. That happened on June 3, 1941: "The document was composed as if war would begin tomorrow. Such an approach is completely unacceptable." Stalin agreed with Malenkov. And Georgi Maksimilianovich proved right—the war did not break out for another nineteen days.



Consequently, nine hours after German troops had attacked in Belorussia, Russian troops still did not have combat orders.

In assessing the possibility of attack by a potential enemy, one cannot study only military strengths. That only asks the question who in the end will win the war. But the aggressor does not always act only when he is sure of success. Otherwise Napoleon, for example, would not have marched into Russia, and the powers of the Triple Entente would not have started the First World War.

It is much more important in analyzing an enemy's intentions to understand the logic and psychology of his strategy. If Stalin had been capable of that realistic sort of thinking, he would almost have had to come to the conclusion that Hitler had little choice but to attack the Soviet Union and to do it soon. Stalin and his comrades only hoped in vain that while Germany fought in the West, they could not start a war against the USSR. Hitler had to think differently. England was not yet broken and Hitler hated and feared England. Behind England stood mighty America, which sooner or later would be drawn into the war. When Molotov visited Berlin in November 1940, he did not respond to the call for the USSR to participate in the war against England. Hitler saw that the Russians were crafty, and that if a good moment presented itself they would fight against Germany. Before he got into the unavoidable clash with America, he wanted to rid himself of the Damocles' sword, Russia,<sup>1</sup> and at the same time to obtain a decisive strategic advantage. As a matter of fact, if the campaign in the East were quick (and he did not think it would be otherwise), Hitler would have huge material and, very likely, almost endless human resources. Then England would have to face an unbelievably strengthened Germany in Europe and in Asia, the Japanese, who were eager to get into the fray. The war would then be settled in favor of the Axis powers. England could not continue the fight and would have to accept German conditions for peace. Even in the case of American intervention, Hitler, as chess players say, would have a stronger position without the Russian colossus at his back.

That sort of thinking might seem farfetched, but, according to the German Chief of Staff, General Franz Halder, that is what Hitler himself had to say about it at a meeting of the Wehrmacht headquarters staff on January 9, 1941:

The hope that the Russians will intervene encourages the English. They will cease to resist when their last hope on the continent is

destroyed. He, the Fuhrer, does not believe that the English are "hopelessly stupid." If they cannot see help coming, they will stop fighting. If they lose, they will never find the moral strength in themselves to preserve the empire. If they can go on and form 30–40 divisions, and if the USA and Russia extend help, that will create a very difficult situation for Germany. We cannot allow that.<sup>2</sup>

Thus for Hitler the continuing war with England was a powerful motivation to attack Russia, just as Stalin saw it as the guarantee of his security.

It is necessary to destroy Russia. Then either England would surrender or Germany would continue the war against England in favorable conditions. The defeat of Russia would also permit Japan to turn their forces against the USA. And that would keep the latter from entering the war. . . . The question of time is especially important for the defeat of Russia. Although the Russian armed forces are a clay colossus without a head, it is impossible to foresee precisely their future development. Inasmuch as it is necessary in any case to defeat Russia, it would be better to do it now while the Russian Army is leaderless and badly prepared. . . . Nonetheless we must not underestimate the Russians now.<sup>3</sup>

Hitler made a fatal error. But that in no way excuses Stalin. He did not foresee the course of events and displayed complete misunderstanding of the aggressor's motives. It is not so, as the official historians say, that the pact of 1939 gave the USSR needed time to strengthen its defenses. On the contrary, it permitted Hitler to take Poland and make preparations to attack the East. In 1939 Germany could not only not have attacked the USSR, but in the absence of the pact would probably not have dared attack Poland for fear of countermeasures taken in concert with England and France.

A great deal of ink and simpleminded effort have been spent to defend Stalin's behavior. In the end there is the elementary conclusion that the Great Leader made a mistake. The country, under the leadership of the Party, prepared to repel aggression; but their timing was off, which put us in a rather bad position early in the war.

This formulation deserves our attention only as an example of shameless disregard for facts and as further proof of the happy certainty

of its authors that they would get away with whatever lies they uttered. We will say more later on the preparedness of the USSR for war and on the difficulty of our position. First of all we note that a statesman who makes such mistakes at the very least is not in the right job, and he should find some more suitable and harmless occupation.

Let us try to find some justifications for Stalin's behavior. Maybe he really was a great philanthropist trying to save the country from the horror of war? Any war, even the most just (and who is to be judge of that), brings the people incalculable suffering and causes a loss of human life that is not compensated for by any conquests. The statesman who wisely keeps his country out of war is blessed. But as hard as we try, we will not find those noble intentions in Stalin. He certainly did not want war. He feared war, primarily because he felt his own incapacity as a leader. He also understood that the real military leaders had been destroyed at his personal orders. The fear of war paralyzed Stalin. He sacrificed the country's security for the sake of intrigue that gratified his imperial ambitions. He paralyzed the preparations for defense and too frequently, through ignorance, did things that helped the enemy.

Might we still be underestimating Stalin? Maybe there was some clever plan concealed in his actions. What if he were trying to avoid that catastrophic error of tsarist policy—when Russia got entangled in a war she was unprepared to fight. If Russia had remained neutral as long as possible, both coalitions would have wooed her—as a potential ally or undesired enemy—and the tsar could have chosen the better deal for Russia.

But there resemblance is only apparent. At the end of the 1930s there were not two equally powerful alliances; there was instead a brazen aggressor and the rest of the world, who rather carelessly and then with alarm, but always passively, watched the aggressor. Besides, Stalin's way of keeping Russia out of the war was highly questionable. For someone who was not eager to fight, he certainly was quick to share in the division of the spoils. If Stalin had wanted to wait out the turn of events as a neutral, he ought not to have begun with a secret deal with the aggressor, providing for territorial acquisitions. That should have been the payment, to speak cynically, at the end of the war for the victorious reinforcement of one of the sides. That hurriedly swallowed bit got stuck in his craw.

When he ventured into such a delicate game, Stalin had to under-



stand the intentions and foresee the actions of the contending sides. He had to understand that Hitler would not tolerate the neutrality of Russia for long, for fear that the Russian card would become the decisive trump in the hands of the Western Allies. If Russia did not become Germany's military ally, then according to Hitler's logic Russia would have to be defeated and subjugated. Hitler's decision was made easier by the display of the Red Army's weakness in the war with Finland in 1940.

Anyone who had taken the trouble to study Hitler's strategic behavior would have to expect him to attack after the failure in Karelia. Hitler's strategy was based on hypertrophied aggressiveness. Seeing weakness anywhere, he was certain to attack. But first he would try to further weaken, disorganize, and demoralize the enemy. Signs of all of that were apparent in the USSR after 1937, thanks to Stalin and his stewardship. Hitler, unlike Stalin, valued the element of time. He hurried, understanding that favorable circumstances could change. Finally Hitler clearly understood the confusion and indecision of the Kremlin dictator. Informing his generals of his plan for war with Russia, he assured them that for the present the USSR would not act first: "Smart men are in charge in Moscow."

This undermines the belief that Stalin had a well-thought-through Fabian strategy. Explanations based on Hitler's perfidy, which Soviet propaganda is so quick to use, do not deserve serious discussion. It was irresponsible to take at his word a man who neither in theory nor in practice recognized any treaties except those that were advantageous to him.

There remains one other explanation, which is more believable. Stalin knew without doubt that Russia was unprepared for war and feared it beyond reason. He hypnotized himself and others with a vain hope for a miracle. Therefore he did not want to hear about even the plainest signs that war was approaching. Such information could not help him much. He still did not know what to do. His will was paralyzed. He lost all the chances he had to correct his mistake. A mystical horror reigned in the Kremlin. To moderate the tension of hopelessness, Stalin invented the theory of the peaceloving nature of Hitler, with whom the bloodthirsty generals were pushing us into war. Therefore we were to sit quietly, not to provoke anyone, not to give the Germans an excuse for war. Fear and apathy reached such heights in the Kremlin that had Hitler thought to roar more loudly, Stalin might have thrown himself at his feet.<sup>4</sup>



He had already gone down on one knee when on June 14, 1941, he issued a TASS announcement, which in black and white assured the people and the whole world that despite the fantasies of hostile propaganda (apparently British) the colossal buildup of German troops at the Soviet border was not aimed against the USSR. Only a week later the invasion began. All of the shameful efforts of the Stalin clique were in vain.<sup>5</sup>

History has laughed cynically at Stalin. It was he who turned out to be the ally and accomplice of German fascism, not those defendants at the Moscow trials who went to their deaths branded agents of the Gestapo.

Stalin's comrades were a lot like their leader. With dull fatalism they awaited the enemy attack. It did not occur to them to remove the incapacitated dictator and busy themselves with saving the Motherland. Woe to the country that entrusts its fate to such leaders.

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## 25 Retribution

We do not have a parade, we have a war.

—Pushkin

As far as decisiveness, enterprise, and willingness to take responsibility are concerned, the whole system in the Russian Army encouraged not the development but the suppression of these moral qualities, the most important for war.

Leadership of the troops has long been the weakest side of the Russian Army. In its extensive combat experience over the last hundred years much bravery has been displayed but precious little military skill. Usually Russian commanders do everything they can to lose a war, and if nonetheless war is won, success can be explained only by the selflessness of the former Russian soldiers who atoned for mistakes of the command with their blood, and by the weakness of the enemies with whom Russia has had to clash.

Formerly in Russia they did not attribute special significance to the mental development of military leaders. In government circles until very recently they held firmly to the conviction that brains were not especially needed to command troops in peacetime, and who knew when war would come.

—E. I. Martynov<sup>1</sup>

The German attack caught us unaware, but it was an unnecessary surprise. The Army's ears had been plugged, its eyes blindfolded, its hands tied. Stalin and the leaders of the People's Commissariat of Defense had done that.

It is impossible to secretly prepare and send into battle an army of several million men. There were sufficient warnings of the approaching invasion. Stalin preferred to ignore them. In normal circumstances he would have been sent before a tribunal for that alone. And beside him in the defendants' box, if justice were to be served, would be many others, including especially the People's Commissar of Defense, Semen Timoshenko, the Chief of the General Staff Georgi Zhukov, and the Chief of Military Intelligence Filipp Golikov.

One cannot justify the actions of that trio by the political circumstances of those years. They maliciously and consistently violated their soldier's obligation to be ready always to defend the Fatherland. Even if we accept the thesis that the tyrant was blind and ignorant and ran things according to preconceived notions, that does not reduce the guilt of the others. They occupied the highest military posts in the country, but they did not even try to oppose Stalin; they did not dare try to show him the inescapable fatal consequences of his policies. On the contrary, they worked closely with him and suppressed those people in the Army who tried to do anything about the situation that was deteriorating from day to day.

### Failures of the Early Period

Soviet propaganda explains the defeats of 1941 by the unexpectedness of the attack, the numerical superiority of the German army, and its superior weaponry. All of this is a deliberate lie.

*Unexpectedness.* Soviet intelligence first obtained information about preparation of a plan to attack the USSR in July 1940, only a few days after the German general staff began work on it.

Hitler approved plan "Barbarossa" on December 18, 1940. Exactly a week later the Soviet military attaché in Berlin received an anonymous letter informing him that the Germans would attack Russia the following spring. By December 29 Soviet intelligence knew the most important facts of plan Barbarossa—its goals and timetable.

American Deputy Secretary of State S. Wallace warned Soviet Ambassador K. Umansky in January 1941 about Germany's plan to attack the USSR.

The Soviet General Staff got hold of extensive material about plan Barbarossa on March 25.<sup>2</sup>

March 25 the Main Intelligence Administration (GRU) reported that 120 German divisions had been moved up to the Soviet borders.

Stalin received a warning from Churchill through British Ambassador S. Cripps on April 3.

The GRU reported on May 5, "Military preparations are being carried on openly in Poland. German officers and soldiers speak of war as a certainty, to begin after spring field work."<sup>3</sup>

On May 22 the assistant to the military attaché in Berlin, Khlopov, sent a report that the invasion would begin on June 15 or slightly

earlier. General Tupikov, the military attaché in Berlin, reported almost daily on the Germans' preparations for war.

June 6. A report of the GRU on the concentration of 4 million German troops on the border. By a strange irony it was on that day that Stalin, as chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, confirmed the plan for putting industry on a war footing by the end of 1942.

With such a quantity of information it is a sin to complain of ignorance or unexpectedness. And we have not yet spoken of Richard Sorge!

He sent his first report of a coming war with Germany on November 18, 1940. On November 28 he informed Moscow about the formation of a new reserve army of forty divisions in Leipzig. Eighty divisions were already stationed along the Soviet-German border, and twenty more were being transferred from France.<sup>4</sup>

On March 5, 1941, Sorge dispatched a photocopy of a telegram from Ribbentrop to Otto, the German ambassador in Tokyo. In it the date for the invasion was set for mid-July.

Sorge's report of April 11 said, "The representative of the General Staff in Japan informs me that immediately after the end of the war in Europe, war with the Soviet Union will commence."

On May 2 Sorge wrote, "Hitler has decided to begin war and to destroy the USSR in order to use the European part of the USSR as a source of raw materials and grain. The most likely times for war to begin: (a) the defeat of Yugoslavia, (b) the end of spring harvest, (c) the end of negotiations with Turkey. Hitler will make the decision about when to begin war in May." On May 4 he reported that war would begin at the end of that month. On May 15 he reported that war would begin between the twentieth and the twenty-second of June. On May 19 he reported, "Nine armies, 150 divisions, are concentrated against the USSR."

Sorge copied a map from the German military attaché in Tokyo on which were marked military objectives in the Soviet Union and indications of the plans of attack. One such objective was to occupy the Ukraine and to use 1 to 2 million prisoners of war as laborers. Between 170 and 190 divisions would be gathered on the borders, and combat operations would be begun without a declaration of war. The Red Army and the Soviet order would be expected to fall in two months. Moscow expressed doubts to Sorge about the reliability of his information on June 12.



The sadly famous TASS announcement that called the threat of Germany going to war against the Soviet Union an invention of hostile propaganda was promulgated in the West on June 13. It appeared in the Soviet press the following day. That same day, after reading the idiotic document, an enraged Sorge radioed, "I repeat: on June 22, nine armies, 150 divisions will invade at dawn."

Thus, as far as unexpectedness is concerned the case is more or less clear. Concerning the other two theses, Soviet authors have created considerable dialectic confusion. It all depends on the context in which the facts are presented. If it is necessary to explain away the failures of the early period, the numbers of German troops are exaggerated and the Soviet troops are said to have had less modern equipment than they did, which fully justifies our temporary setbacks. In those cases when it is necessary to prove that Stalin and his underlings were not dreaming, that they were prepared for war, the tone and content of the speeches change. We learn that our Army was supplied with sufficient amounts of all sorts of the most modern military equipment and that the potential of our military industry surpassed that of Germany by one-and-a-half times. The numbers of our troops and combat units do not change much from report to report.

### **Numerical Superiority**

As we have already said, there is great confusion in numbering the German troops. Moreover, it is very important to know what sort of troops Hitler threw against Russia in June 1941. Some Soviet sources<sup>5</sup> say that a monstrous army of 8.5 million men was thrown into plan Barbarossa. Another assessment says that the 190 divisions comprised 5.5 million men.<sup>6</sup> But alas, these convenient figures do not stand up even under superficial analysis. It turns out that between 1939 and the end of May 1941, 7.4 million were called up into the Wehrmacht.<sup>7</sup> If the losses of the Polish campaign and on the Western Front are subtracted, we find the remainder is around 7 million. We must remember that Germany continued to fight in the West and in Africa and maintained occupation forces over the greater part of the European continent.

In the interests of comparability we will take statistics of only the land forces of both sides. We have to do that because these are the only figures available for the Red Army.

Hitler threw against the Soviet Union land forces numbering 3.3 million.<sup>8</sup> The Red Army then numbered approximately 5 million men, 2.9 million of whom were in the western regions.<sup>9</sup> Besides that, before the war the 16th Army (M. F. Lukin), the 19th Army, and two corps were transferred from the North Caucasus region to the Ukraine. Altogether there were five armies near the western borders. In the European part of the country there were no fewer than 4 million men under arms.

Several works give statistics on the number of divisions: Germany had 152; the USSR in the western regions, 170 divisions and two brigades.<sup>10</sup> Halder gives slightly different figures in his "Diary": 141 and 213 divisions, respectively.<sup>11</sup> We must keep in mind that German divisions were larger than the Soviet.

The conclusion is simple. If the Germans did have more men at the front, their numerical superiority cannot be termed impressive or overwhelming.<sup>12</sup> The defenders should most certainly have been able to put up an organized resistance.

### Technical Superiority

Here we encounter not only the simple distortion of facts, but also unsubstantiated, brazen, and blasphemous lies. To tell such things to the Soviet people who had gone hungry and died of starvation during the Five-Year Plan for the sake of creating defensive power—people who make such assertions carelessly, without bothering to explain the reasons, must have armor-plated consciences. Truly, as the Ukrainian saying goes, no conscience, no shame.

It is interesting that they avoided using statistics on this point. If one considers the quality of weapons, then the war showed that in most types of weaponry the USSR surpassed Germany. Our medium tank, the T-34, was undoubtedly the best in Europe; the KV heavy tank was in any case not inferior to its German counterpart. Both of these Soviet tanks were available in significant numbers at the beginning of the war. Our artillery was more powerful and more numerous than the Germans'. Such effective weapons as rocket launchers (Katiusha) were developed long before the war. Only the sluggishness of the leadership (Stalin and Kulik) kept them from being supplied to the troops.

In aviation the picture was not so clear. In numbers of airplanes we were far ahead of the Germans, but many of ours were no longer suited

by their technical-tactical characteristics for modern warfare; they were obsolete. It was discovered during the war in Spain that we had been developing our air force improperly. Steps were taken to correct the deficiency. By 1941, new planes had been produced that were as good as what the Germans had—the MIG-3, IAK-1, LA-3. The enemy was not able to build an attack plane to match the IL-2 during the whole war. These new planes were put into mass production, and by the commencement of hostilities more than 3,000 had been given to the air force. Our fleet was more powerful than the Germans' as well.

Where we did lag behind the Germans was in supplying automatic weapons to the troops. Here Kulik, of unhappy memory, with Stalin's protection, had laid his dirty hand.

We will not go into great statistical detail. We hope that these fairly general statistics (table 25.1) will be sufficient. Because of contradictions in the sources on Soviet arms, we will offer several variations.

We will permit ourselves a brief comment on table 25.1. The Germans did not have an advantage in tanks. Assault guns and a fairly large number of obsolete tanks, German, French, and Czechoslovakian, were included in the 2,800 combat vehicles. The Wehrmacht clearly did not have enough new tanks. German industry produced only 2,800 medium tanks in 1940 and the first half of 1941. Heavy tanks appeared only in 1943 and then only 100.<sup>13</sup> The Wehrmacht did not surpass the Red Army in modern medium tanks; in heavy tanks they lagged behind (we had 654 KV tanks in 1941); in light tanks they were far behind.

The enemy's air power was even more questionable. In 1940 and the first half of 1941 German aviation plants produced 10,000 fighter planes, attack planes, and bombers. Losses for that period exceeded 7,500.<sup>14</sup>

We should also remember that in manpower and military economic potential, Germany was far behind Russia (see table 25.2). If you also consider England, the picture looks even worse.<sup>15</sup>

Even if we add in Italy, which had a population of 43 million and a weak economy, and which fought its own war and did not participate in the war against the USSR, the position of the Third Reich looked pretty doubtful even in June 1941—months before the United States entered the war.

But that leaves us with a paradox. It turns out that the Germans were not stronger than we were. But how do we get from there to the fact that in 1941 they dealt the Red Army a series of stinging defeats; captured

Table 25.1 Comparison of German and Soviet Large Armaments, 1940–41.

Wehrmacht, in the East		Red Army		
Type of weapon		VOV <sup>a</sup>	Zhukov <sup>b</sup>	Lototsky <sup>c</sup>
Tanks	2,800 (including assault guns)	Western regions, 1,475 <sup>d</sup> (only T-34s and KVs)	7,000 total; Western regions; 1,800 heavy and medium (two-thirds new) and many light	—
Artillery (guns and mortars)	48,000	of .76 caliber or larger, one- half as many as the Germans	92,578 total; Western regions; 35,000	67,335 total (excluding 50 mm mortars); 34,695 in Western regions
Airplanes	4,950 (including 1,000 Romanian and Finnish)	—	17,745 total; 3,719 new models; Western regions; 1,500 new and a larger number of obsolete	—

a *Velikaia otechestvennaia voina Sovetskogo Soiuz, 1941–1945* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1969), pp. 33, 53.

b G. Zhukov, *Vospominaniia i razmyshleniia* (Moscow: Novosti, 1969), pp. 205, 206, 209.

c S. S. Lototsky, *Istoriia voyn i voennogo iskusstva* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1970), p. 157.

d See *Istoriia Velikoi otechestvennoi voyny Sovetskogo Soiuz, 1941–1945*, edited by P. N. Pospelov, 6 vols. (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1961–65), vol. 1, p. 415.

Belorussia, the Ukraine, and the Baltic region; marched to Moscow; and besieged Leningrad? How could they? Was the German soldier that much superior to the Russian?

Such a suggestion is far from accurate; there are no facts to substantiate it. But if we apply that yardstick to the command staff, the conclusion forces itself upon us. The limits of our book are too narrow for a detailed and exhaustive analysis; but we can reliably conclude that in 1941 the Soviet command, especially the high command, was inferior to Germany's in practically all ways. Our troops' lack of combat experience also had an effect, but it was secondary. The major cause of our early defeats was that the Germans surpassed us in the quality of



Table 25.2 Comparison of Manpower and Military Economic Potential of Three Countries in 1940–41

Country	Population in millions	Military production in billions of dollars, 1944 prices
USSR	190.6	8.5
England	48.2	6.5
Combined	238.8	15.0
Germany	69.8	6.0

leadership on all levels: in strategic planning, in operations, and even in tactical thinking. The Germans had their problems. They were hampered by ineffective organization of their higher command and by Hitler's inconsistency, wildness, and dilletantism—but to a lesser degree than we were by analogous problems.

The recent destruction of our officer corps played an enormous, possibly decisive, role in our weakness. Who is to blame for that is sufficiently clear. But the top leaders of the Red Army, Timoshenko and Zhukov, must bear a large share of responsibility also. However tattered and disorganized their staff might have been, they were still obliged to do everything humanly possible to keep the enemy from catching us unaware. All the more so, since they had vast human and material resources at their disposal. They neglected much that was their responsibility to do. They shamefully and spinelessly followed the tyrant down the path to national ruin. Here is a far from complete summary of their mistakes.

The mistakes before the war include:

(1) They made an incorrect evaluation of the strength and intentions of the enemy.

(2) There was no plan for strategic deployment in case of war.

(3) Troops of the western regions were not deployed in combat-ready positions but remained in garrisons; the regional commands were not informed that war might soon be upon them.

(4) They neglected border fortifications (the old fortifications were destroyed before the new ones were constructed).

(5) They stopped all precautionary measures usually carried out by the troops.<sup>16</sup>

(6) The carelessness of the leadership extended so far that no spe-

cially equipped command post was built for headquarters in Moscow in case of war.<sup>17</sup>

(7) Most important, Timoshenko and Zhukov did not insist on mobilization, which would not have been too late even at the beginning of June. Such a measure would certainly have disrupted the Germans' plans and might have prevented the invasion altogether.

In the first hours and days of war the leaders of the Peoples' Commissariat of Defense did no better. A few examples include:

(1) When they had learned of the German invasion, Timoshenko and Zhukov squabbled for a long while over who should call Stalin. This happened in the presence of Admiral Kuznetsov.

(2) They lost control of the troops.<sup>18</sup> NKO directive Number One (Order on the Commencement of War) was announced no earlier than 7:15 AM, that is, four hours after the invasion. The order bore the stamp of confusion. It did not say that the USSR and Germany were in a state of war. Our troops were ordered to destroy the invading forces, but were forbidden to cross the Soviet border. It almost sounds like a cruel joke. Aerial reconnaissance was permitted to fly only 100–150 kilometers into enemy territory. They could bomb only Königsberg and Memel. Flights over Romania and Finland without special permission were forbidden.<sup>19</sup>

(3) They were guided by the fallacious strategy of defending every scrap of land, which was developed in conditions when the initiative was entirely on the side of the enemy.<sup>20</sup> That was like trying to put out a forest fire by piling brushwood in its path. As early as the 1920s, A. A. Svechin had warned of the fatal danger of such a course. We should instead have made a rapid and orderly retreat to lines that we could realistically defend. That would have avoided the senseless losses and demoralization of the troops, and the momentum of the attacking enemy would have been partly absorbed by the distance. But where could Timoshenko and Zhukov have read Svechin! Even with the strategy of Barclay de Tolly and Kutuzov, they were acquainted only by hearsay.

We cannot omit the figure of Golikov, who headed strategic intelligence before the war. That the intelligence organs continuously warned of the danger of an attack would seem to exonerate Golikov of any blame and even put him among those who suffered for the truth. But things were not that simple.

Golikov did not conceal his agents' reports. He delivered them to the

Defense Commissariat, the General Staff, and to Stalin, but in a most unusual way. He put information about the Germans' preparations for war and about the date of the attack in the category of rumors and other unreliable information. When many years later he was asked why he had done this, he replied that he had acted with the best intentions, that Stalin believed in rumors more than anything else. Possibly admirers of paradoxes will accept that admission, but the tedious duties of the historian force us to another conclusion: that Golikov wanted to please the leadership by telling Stalin what he wanted to hear. Golikov and others like him helped to create an atmosphere in higher Soviet circles that Harrison Salisbury has accurately characterized: "The record strongly suggests that Stalin, Zhdanov and his associates were living in a world turned inside out, in which black was assumed to be white, in which danger was seen as security, in which vigilance was assessed as treason and friendly warning as cunning provocation."

Of course that was not all Golikov's doing. That sort of social pathology was characteristic of the Stalinist system: "Unless there is a clear channel from lower to top levels, unless the leadership insists upon honest and objective reporting and is prepared to act upon such reports, regardless of preconceptions, prejudices, past commitments, and personal politics, the best intelligence in the world goes to waste—or, even worse, is turned into an instrument of self-deceit."<sup>21</sup>

Golikov wrote on one of Sorge's last reports that his story was invented by the English, who were eager to draw the USSR into the war. Stalin believed him. It was precisely that formula that was used in the notorious TASS announcement.<sup>22</sup>

However shamefully the intelligence chief conducted himself, he got away with it all. It was much worse for the real heroes of the secret front. A vivid example is the fate of Sorge himself. He was a German who worked many years against Germany and provided invaluable services for the USSR. His reward was distrust. In October and November 1941 he warned of Japan's plans to attack the United States. That removed the Japanese threat to the Soviet Far East for the foreseeable future and permitted the so-called Siberian divisions to be transferred west where they played a decisive role in the defense of Moscow.

Soon after that, Sorge fell into the hands of the Japanese in circumstances that suggest he may have been betrayed. Unbeknownst to him his wife was already in a Soviet camp. He spent almost three years in a Japanese prison. Stalin did not get around to arranging an exchange for him.<sup>23</sup>

## Stalin as a Commander

The flattering phrases that were lavished on Stalin's military genius while he was alive do not deserve our attention, all the more so since he wrote the score for the performance. Nonetheless, to this day many people, including many high-ranking military officers, continue to think of Stalin as a great commander. The logic in that is straightforward. The Soviet Union won the war. You know who was at the head of the Army: QED. The venerable memoirists (such as Zhukov, Vasilevsky, Shtemenko) present us with that general conclusion without backing it up with facts, although when they speak of specific incidents in which the Great Leader participated, another conclusion thrusts itself upon the reader. The more one becomes acquainted with military memoirs, the more he is confirmed in the opinion that Stalin's personal decisions concerning the Army and Navy were not only wrong, but that they often worked to the advantage of the enemy.

The proof of that thesis as applied to the prewar period is the whole of our book. As far as the war itself is concerned, we refer the reader to the memoirs of Soviet commanders and invite him to make his own conclusions. Here we will give space to only a few striking facts, picked more or less at random.

(1) Stalin, as tyrants often are, was a coward. News of the invasion therefore made him despondent. Not knowing that fate had prepared for him the laurels of the Greatest Commander of all Times and Peoples, he still hoped against hope that there would be some way to avoid war and come to a friendly agreement with the aggressor. Halder's Diary for June 22 contains the following entry: "12:00 (2:00 P.M. in Moscow). News has arrived that the Russians have resumed international radio communication that was broken off yesterday morning. They have appealed to Japan to represent Russia's interests in the matter of political and economic relations between Russia and Germany and are carrying on lively negotiations by radio with the German minister of foreign affairs."<sup>24</sup>

These urgent, shameful efforts were futile. Hitler preferred to fight. Now Stalin was really stuck. He secluded himself in his Kremlin apartments and got drunk. Stumbling out he uttered for history the pompous phrase, "Lenin's great work has perished. We were unable to defend it."

To resort to alcohol at critical moments was in character for Stalin.



When the tsarist police caught Kamo-Petrosian after the hold-up of the Tiflis bank, Stalin, the main organizer of the raid, conducted himself in a similar manner. He got drunk and shook with fear. (Kamo did not betray him. A grateful Stalin removed him in 1924.) Now it seemed that no miracle would save the erstwhile seminarian. In the June days of 1941, Stalin was more interested in his personal fate than in the outcome of the war. He expected that they would simply take him, the bankrupt adventurer who led the country to the brink of the abyss, and put him against the wall. But time passed, and this did not happen. Finally, on June 29th, the eighth day of the war, several members of the Politburo came to the hermit. They found him dirty and unshaven. Here we go, thought Stalin. But nothing of the sort. The Red courtiers wanted only to ask for a meeting of the TSK and SNK. Stalin relaxed. Then they very gently hinted that he could retire if he chose to. This was the sort of conversation Stalin could comprehend. If they were not planning to kill him, he was certainly not going to give up his power. They somehow managed to make the Great Leader presentable. On July 3 he made a radio address to the Soviet people.

Stalin took heart and once again picked up all the reins of state and military administration. Naming himself Supreme Commander-in-Chief did not, however, fill him with martial valor. He preferred not to visit areas where the fighting was going on. He is known to have visited a front area only once, near Viazma in August 1943; and on that occasion, according to A. I. Eremenko, he did not create an impression of bravery.

(2) Despite his phenomenal memory, Stalin had a very foggy notion about the organization of a modern army. Because of that he was receptive to all sorts of fantastic projects. N. N. Voronov writes, "From time to time completely absurd plans would appear at Headquarters. I was surprised that Stalin took them seriously." For example, late in 1943, he was taken by the idea to unite artillery and tanks into a single arm of the service. The consequences of such an innovation—it was not done—were easy to predict. At the same time he thought to reintroduce the institution of commanders-in-chief of groups of fronts, an idea that had failed spectacularly in 1941.<sup>25</sup>

Still earlier, before the war, Stalin had with one stroke of the pen liquidated the position of commander-in-chief of artillery of the Red Army and had transferred those functions to the Chief Artillery Administration under his favorite, Kulik.<sup>26</sup> When the latter failed so com-

pletely in the first days of the war. Stalin wondered; “‘how could it be,’ he asked Voronov, ‘that our artillery has no commander-in-chief? By whom and when was that decision made?’ ‘By you, sir!’ I wanted to answer. I reminded him in a few words of the meeting in the Kremlin where that question had been decided.”<sup>27</sup>

In July 1941, Stalin asked Commander-in-Chief of the Antiaircraft Defense Voronov to take charge of constructing defense works in the Ukraine: Volonov’s recollection was that Molotov supported him. “I had to prove that I was not a specialist at such work. I advised them to assign the work of building defense lines to the commander of the Chief Engineering Administration, that that was in the immediate sphere of his responsibilities. They were both surprised: ‘We really have such a thing?’ ‘Of course. Our Chief of Engineering Administration is General Kotliar.’”<sup>28</sup>

We could tell many such anecdotes. Here is one more. In winter 1942 rear services reported to Stalin a shortage of special packings. That was official language for ammunition boxes. Commander of Rear Services A. V. Khrulev suggested that an order be issued making return of used boxes mandatory. The solution was brilliant. Stalin agreed with it and added a note, “if any units do not return ammunition boxes, their supply of ammunition should be immediately cut off, *no matter how the battle is going*.” No more, no less. Josef Vissarionovich did not want to seem any less decisive than Alexander the Great.<sup>29</sup>

(3) Stalin was completely incapable of strategic thinking. An obvious illustration is his behavior in early 1942. After Soviet troops had pushed the Germans back from Moscow, the Great Leader was immediately seized with uncontrollable optimism. He was sure that that had been the turning point in the war and that victory was just around the corner. How was he to understand that the German commander-in-chief of land forces had evaluated his situation, found it unfavorable, and had accomplished an orderly strategic retreat to a preselected position? In so doing he had managed to preserve his forces: “The 4th Army and the 3rd Tank Group were not destroyed, and the 2nd Tank Group retained its entire strength.”<sup>30</sup> Hitler fired Brauchitsch for that. He, like Stalin, was more impressed by the “butchery strategy,” bloody battles for every scrap of land. Nonetheless, the German retreat continued.

What did Stalin do? He instructed the Military Councils of the fronts: “Our task is to give the Germans no chance to catch their

breath, to drive them west without stopping, to force them to expend their reserves before spring, when we will have large new reserves but the Germans will have no more reserves, and thus ensure the *complete destruction of Hitler's troops in 1942*."<sup>31</sup>

That stirring order from the Supreme Commander thoroughly disoriented all of the front commanders. Everywhere they saw the enemy's retreat as panicked flight. Even the careful Vatutin was enchanted by the mood. The behavior of the front commanders is to a certain degree understandable. Each might think that Stalin had based his order on an analysis of the whole strategic situation, that Headquarters had information about the critical situation of the enemy.

The general Soviet attack on all fronts quickly expired. It resulted only in the complete expenditures of reserves, which had been gathered with immense effort. But Stalin did not give up his obsession, to defeat the Germans in 1942. In May he supported Timoshenko's and Khrushchev's lamebrained plan to attack Kharkov. As a result, four Soviet armies wound up encircled by the enemy. Stalin did not permit them to withdraw in time and they were destroyed. The Germans gained decisive superiority on the left wing of our troops and were able to reach the main Caucasus ridge and the Volga. The airborne operation in the Crimea did not accomplish its purposes. Leningrad continued to agonize in blockade. The spring-summer campaign of 1942 was lost by the Soviet command.

The crown, the peak of Stalin's work as a commander is rightfully considered the Berlin operation. Of course, even without it he would have enriched military science. We have already spoken of some of his exploits, but much more has been left out, for example, the very original suggestion to create another Horse Army, put forth in 1942. Only the unconscionable but unanimous opposition of the General Staff kept that thought from being made flesh. But the Berlin operation is a special subject that we cannot avoid.

Strategists of the old school saw their main objective not in winning every individual battle, but in gaining final victory, putting the enemy out of the war. Stalin was a strategist of the new school and did not have the right to act according to old precepts. Already in November 1944 he foresaw that the war would be ended by the taking of Berlin. It was then decided that the capture of the imperial capital would be assigned to Marshal Zhukov, who had remained the Supreme Commander's first deputy. With that end in mind he was appointed commander of the First Belorussian Front. The question of the expediency of the Berlin



operation, of how it would be accomplished, was never discussed at Headquarters.

That the war would have to end with the victorious entrance of Soviet troops into Berlin was axiomatic for Stalin. True, in the First World War Germany had been defeated without the enemy's entering German territory. But Stalin was always prone to primitive symbolism, as was Hitler, who gave Stalingrad such mystical importance, who wasted so many troops in the fruitless efforts to take it. We can assume without doubt that in 1945 Germany, hard-pressed from two sides, would not have been able to hold out for long. The last inches of victory could have been had without a dramatic final assault and without the heavy casualties, the last senseless, unneeded casualties, that did inevitably result. But what did Stalin care for the grief and tears of hundreds of thousands of mothers, whose sons did not survive those last days and hours before peace? Still, since it did not come within the purview of the Soviet command, we will leave the strategic foundation of the Berlin operation in peace.

On January 26, 1945, Zhukov's and Konev's troops reached the Oder. Both commanders saw their chance to keep moving into an attack on Berlin and asked permission from Headquarters. Stalin, who had taken upon himself coordination of all efforts in the direction of Berlin,<sup>32</sup> confirmed the plan only a day later. A line was demarcated between the two fronts as Zhukov had recommended. That in itself was artificial and limiting. Stalin did not forget that he had already appointed Zhukov the victor of Berlin. Zhukov himself had no desire to share the laurels with anyone else. Therefore the line they drew did not leave Konev a "window" through which to strike at his objective. There arose a paradoxical situation, which then Deputy Chief of the General Staff Shtemenko has described thus: "The result was an obvious absurdity: on the one hand they confirmed the decision that Marshal Konev would be the right wing in the attack on Berlin, and on the other established a line of demarcation that would not permit him to do it."<sup>33</sup>

The assault on Berlin did not happen in February, however, because at the last moment Zhukov hesitated. He considered the threat of an attack on his flank by the enemy concentrated in Eastern Pomerania too serious. It is hard to say how well-founded his fears were. In any case his subordinate V. I. Chuikov, whose 8th Guard Army stood sixty kilometers from Berlin, held a different opinion, which he maintained even after the war. Chuikov claimed that Berlin was practically defense-



less and that he could take it before the Germans could mount a flanking attack. We do not plan to be the judges of that argument. We note only that Zhukov preferred to postpone the storming and to attack without Konev. (Had he attacked with Konev, he could have detached part of his forces to defend his flank.)

By the end of March both fronts, especially Zhukov's, had amassed huge reserves. The capture of Berlin was put back onto the agenda. The plan of the operation was reviewed in the General Staff on March 31 with the participation of Zhukov and Konev. The latter, extremely annoyed by his awkward situation, insisted that the line of demarcation be altered. But who could change Stalin's decision?

The next day the Supreme Commander in Chief decided to accelerate the seizure of Berlin. He feared that the Americans and English might beat him to it.<sup>34</sup> A new meeting was called, this time with Stalin present. From the very beginning, Chief of General Staff A. I. Antonov objected to such a plan of operation. He had already shown Stalin the faults in the plan, but all he had achieved was that Stalin had forbidden him to raise the question. On April 1 Antonov decided nonetheless to try again, understanding fully how risky such insistence was in relation to Stalin. He expressed the opinion that not letting the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front attack the German capital might make the operation unnecessarily long. Stalin exploded, and capitulated. Without saying a word he walked to the map and erased a sixty-kilometer sector of the demarcation line from Liuben to Berlin. The road to Berlin was open for Konev's troops.

Stalin valued Antonov's courage. After the war, unlike most of the other leaders of the war effort, he was not made a marshal.

## The Price

With hindsight it is easy to find mistakes and say what ought to have been done. In real life, when time to think is short and information is always insufficient, mistakes are inevitable. No one can choose to fight only when he is sure of success. Why then stir up the past? Especially since we won.

Still there are two questions we want to ask: (1) who won in the Fatherland war? (2) at what cost was victory gained?

The most general, negative reply to the first question flows logically from all our books: not Stalin. But discussing his role once more is not

excessive. Too many of our countrymen know too little of the truth about the war.

Stalin himself touched upon that problem immediately after the victory. He wanted above all to give his own interpretation of events and at the same time to close, to settle, the question, not to give anyone else a chance to explain. On May 24, 1945, he made a toast at a reception honoring the troop commanders of the Red Army. This brief speech is filled with profound political significance: "I would like to raise a toast to the health of our Soviet people and first of all to the Russian people. . . . I drink, first of all, to the health of the Russian people because it is the most outstanding nation of all nations comprising the Soviet Union."<sup>35</sup>

"The most outstanding nation" and further on "the leading force" and "the leading nation." Such a point of view was sensational innovation in the official lexicon. Until then the leading force had always been expressed in terms of class—the working class and its Party. Now the ruler had proclaimed the superiority of one, the main, people over the others. It was new and unexpected. It was an important change with far-reaching consequences.

Stalin had openly declared his solidarity with Nazi doctrine. The "leading nation" is but a translation of the German expression "nation-Fuhrer." The other peoples of the Soviet nation had been pronounced inferior, which encouraged nationalistic prejudice and rubbed salt in recent wounds. The rewriting of history was immediately begun. It was soon discovered that tsarist Russia was not at all the "prison of peoples," as the Bolsheviks had been fond of saying, and that the national minorities—who for so many years had resisted the encroachment of the Russian empire—had in fact joined the empire voluntarily. Even the conquest of the Caucasus, so vividly described by Marlinsky, Lermontov, and L. Tolstoy, was said not to have taken place. Dagestan was presented with a holiday to celebrate its union with Russia; Shamil was discovered to be a Turkish spy. The thesis of superiority of the Russian people also served as a signal for a new anti-Semitic campaign, which was at its worst from 1949 to 1953. The inferior Jews were removed from important positions, driven from scientific, cultural, and ideological institutions, not permitted to enroll in institutes of higher education, slandered as rootless cosmopolitans. The circle closed: the war with fascism, whose banner proclaimed the final solution, ended with the adoption of their anti-Semitic policy in our country.

But that is not all that can be found in the five-minute toast. At the official reception in honor of the victory, Stalin also spoke of recent failures: "Our government made more than a few mistakes. We had our moments of despair in 1941 and 1942 when our Army retreated . . . because there was nothing else we could do." Stalin did not try to analyze his mistakes. He resorted to a standard rhetorical gambit—he set up a straw man and then easily demolished it. "Another people might say to the Government, You have not met our expectations, get thee gone. We will erect another government which will make peace with Germany and give us peace."

The alternative was transparently false; there could not be peace with the aggressor. It was Stalin himself who had played that suicidal game with Hitler and had tried to make a deal even after the Nazi invasion. There was another solution: to put an honest and capable leader at the head of the country. But it was not in the Great Leader's interests to discuss that possibility.

Not long before, Stalin had paid the Russian people a generous compliment: "it has a clear mind, a firm character, and patience." By itself such a characterization is meaningless. It can be said of any nation that it has a dull mind and so forth. This was a cruel and capricious mockery. Here the whole point was in the patience: "But the Russian people did not choose that path, because it believed in the rightness of the policies of its Government and chose the path of sacrifice to ensure the defeat of Germany." The tyrant was flushed with the triumph, and still he could not keep from taunting. The Russian people had taken it all with patience: collectivization, famine, the purges, and the right policies, which had led the country into despair.

The final flourish was easy for Stalin: "And that trust of the Russian people for its Soviet government was the decisive force that gave us the historical victory over the enemy of mankind—over fascism."

Oh, how neat. The victory was gained not by the struggle of the people, not by its desperate efforts, not by its sacrifices (we have yet to speak of its unthinkable enormity), but by its trust in the government, that is, in Stalin. It was clear who had won—Stalin.

Now we will make our own conclusions. The war was won by the peoples of the Soviet Union, the Russians and all the others. Any reference to the exceptional contribution of any one of them is a mockery of the countless graves in which our soldiers and citizens lie without regard to nationality. Our soldiers at the front, our women, the old



men, and youths in the rear won the war despite Stalin and his subordinates, whose policies were treason to the Motherland, committed for the most selfish reasons. Our people defended their homes and their land, not Stalin and the yoke of steel he fastened on the necks of the people.

Stalin, Voroshilov, Timoshenko, Zhukov, Golikov, Kulik, Mekhlis, Molotov, Zhdanov, Beria, and the others like them lost their war; in vain they ruined millions of human lives. Although they decorated themselves with splendid trinkets, that was not their just reward for the peoples' victory. Zhukov and Vasilevsky, who stood at the wheel of the Soviet war machine, have given us their memoirs. It is futile, however, to expect from them an honest evaluation of their own actions or of the policies of their Leader. They are bound with the same chain to Stalin. Stalin has taken them into a dirty, vile, and bloody history. They hoped to the last that history could be cleaned up, whitewashed, and lacquered, and that they could remain in it. They found a pair of unattractive features in their Generalissimo, but on the whole they thought of him favorably and respectfully. In him they saw and judged themselves.<sup>36</sup>

We have only a bit more to say, but it is the most horrifying—about our losses. When we speak of the difficulties of the Soviet Union in the early part of the war, we must not let that conceal the fact that Hitler's attack was a mad adventure. He counted on beating the Red Army in six weeks. When that failed—and it could not have succeeded—Hitler was lost. We had important advantages on our side (we will take only those that can be realistically evaluated): (1) enormous territory; (2) greater human and material resources; (3) armaments, which were no worse than Germany's at the start of the war and superior later on; and (4) stronger allies. In a long struggle the weaker enemy would have to capitulate in the end. Consequently, it makes more sense to speak not of the victory itself, which was foreordained by our superiority, but of the cost that we paid for that victory. Only in that way can we make an objective judgment of the quality of the country's leadership during the war.

We might expect that the losses we suffered for victory would at the very worst be equal to the losses of the defeated enemy. We will begin with those. First we will make a brief observation. Usually the statistics of war include as casualties of all those who were somehow lost to the armed forces—killed, wounded, captured, and missing in action. We will be most interested in those who died, who were killed or died



Table 25.3 German War Casualties, September 1, 1939–April 20, 1945

Type of casualty	Eastern Front	Western Front	Total
Killed	1,044,178	156,796	1,201,974
Wounded	4,122,041	557,510	4,679,551
MIA and POW	1,400,646	987,985	2,388,631
All casualties	6,567,465	1,703,291	8,270,756

of wounds, that is, people who were irretrievably lost to the country.

Casualty statistics were well kept in the German army almost to the very end of the war. Table 25.3 details the figures for the period from September 1, 1939, to April 20, 1945.<sup>37</sup> According to table 25.3, the German army lost 1.2 million men killed on both fronts, including more than 1 million on the Eastern Front. But this is not the answer to the question about the numbers killed. Some of the wounded died of their wounds, and some of the MIAs were also killed. In addition, this table does not include information on the last eighteen days of the war, during which the battle for Berlin took place. Almost a million German soldiers took part in that battle.

A complete accounting would bring us close to the figures given in Western sources. The German army lost approximately 3 million men who were killed outright or died of wounds. Losses among the civilian population were also approximately 3 million.

No such detailed Soviet statistics have ever been published. It is said that they simply do not exist. Our sources speak of casualties unwil-lingly, sparingly, and every time slightly differently. Immediately after the victory it was announced that the USSR's losses in the war totalled 6 million people. A few years later the figure was made a more nearly precise 9 million; somewhat later the count was given at 10 million. In the 1950s a certain colonel of the MGB defected to the West with a secret figure—of 20 million. Official Soviet organs at first disavowed that statistic but soon began to use it themselves. Khrushchev once said it was 22 million. These figures all refer to total deaths for the Army and the civilian population combined. As many civilians seem to have died as soldiers.

Now we are told that the Red Army lost 10 million soldiers and officers. Alas, that is but half the truth. Demographic calculations by a former Soviet professor, Kurganov, based on comparisons

of the censuses of 1939 and 1959, yield even more horrifying figures: total losses, 45 million; in the Army, 22 million.<sup>38</sup>

So, then, 45:6, 22:3, such were the ratios of losses borne by the Soviet and German people. The difference in population size between the two countries does not reduce the enormity. Germany sacrificed 8.6 percent of its population on the altar of war; we gave 23 percent, almost a quarter of the nation. That is the cost of Stalin's genius, of his policies—inalterably right for all times—the cost of destroying the Army in peacetime, of unanimous and enthusiastic approval. God, bless Russia! Spare us from such trials and leaders!

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## Afterword

Our book has come to its end. We have gathered—fragmentarily and incompletely, but as well as we could—material about the sorrowful fate of the Red Army. As best we could we have told of its fall, which was so tragic for the whole country, which drained its lifeblood, which deprived it of millions of its sons and daughters. We have told you again and again: remember the names of the executioners of the Army, the destroyers of the Motherland. Now we will tell you something else.

It would be the greatest hypocrisy to lay the whole blame for the most enormous bloodbath in the history of Russia and the memory of man on Stalin and Voroshilov, Molotov and Malenkov, Ezhov and Beria, on the yes-men and their inspirers. Such a conclusion would be comforting and would soothe our consciences. The most caustic bleach will not whiten the blackness of the evil done by these people. But it is not the whole truth.

There is something not quite right with ourselves. These evil demons did not come from other countries or worlds. They are our countrymen, our brothers, fathers, uncles, our relations, our twins. Let the modern Russian chauvinists console themselves that all of the problems of Holy Russia are caused by the ubiquitous Jews, the Georgians, the Catholic Poles, Latvian gunmen. That is explanation enough for the spiritually empty and the born blind. It is not an answer, however, to the anguishing, soul-devouring question; it is only the twisting of primitive thought.

Let us not feel sorry for ourselves. There is a flaw, a wormhole in our national consciousness. It is hard to describe it in a few words, but primarily it lies in our toleration of evil and our submissiveness to unjust authority. We accept the deliberate and obvious lies. So it has been, so it will be. Taking it all, getting used to the stench of falsehood, we lose faith in the ability of our own reason; we grow deaf to the voice of moral feeling and subordinate our weak wills to the iron decisiveness of the tyrants. Many go further. They find rapture, passion, and ecstasy in the very loss of personality, vision, and reason. It gets so that

the people devour themselves following the reckless ventures of the leaders. What would Stalin's cannibalistic thoughts have come to if he had not found millions of assistants, most of whom did not manage to save their own heads. They presented themselves. They came at the first call to do the paranoid's bidding, and dying they blessed him. Hysterically they mourned his death. Despite the unheard of suffering of their country they found cause to boast and swagger. Even after a small part of the truth of Stalin's crimes were revealed, they (we?) remained secret admirers of the fallen Leader.

This tragedy is not simply a page of history, but an open wound in the heart of Russia, the fetters on its soul, the blinders on its eyes. Words of revenge would be out of place. That would not bring back our dead. And on whom do we take revenge when the organizers and inspirers of the slaughter are already in their honored graves? The aged Molotov perhaps, or Malenkov, or hundreds of lesser executioners?

To tell the truth about everything, to hide nothing, to clean nothing up—that is our sacred duty to the memory of the innocent dead, to our children, to the future of the Motherland. The spiritual rebirth of the country is impossible while evil remains hidden away, unjudged, while the triumphant lie paralyzes our will, devours our soul, and lulls our conscience.

June 11, 1977  
Moscow





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# Appendixes



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## **I. Higher Commanders of the RKKA Who Died in the Repressions of 1937–1939, by Rank**

These lists, and the list in appendix II, were made primarily by comparing official lists of military promotions published in 1935 and 1940. Because it is impossible at present to conduct a thorough check, it is possible that there is some inaccuracy at the brigade level.

### **Marshal of the Soviet Union**

1. Blucher, V. K.
2. Egorov, A. I.
3. Tukhachevsky, M. N.

### **Army Commander First Class (General of the Army)**

4. Belov, I. P.
5. Uborevich, I. P.
6. Iakir, I. E.

### **Army Commissar First Class (General of the Army)**

7. Gamarnik, Ia. B.

### **Army Commander Second Class (Colonel General)**

- |                     |                        |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| 8. Alksnis, Ia. I.  | 13. Kork, A. I.        |
| 9. Vatsetis, I. I.  | 14. Levandovsky, M. K. |
| 10. Dubovoi, I. N.  | 15. Sediakin, A. I.    |
| 11. Dybenko, P. E.  | 16. Fedko, I. F.       |
| 12. Kashirin, N. D. | 17. Khalepsky, I. A.   |

### **Army Commissar Second Class (Colonel General)**

- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 18. Amelin, M. P.      | 26. Landa, M. M.       |
| 19. Aronshtam, L. N.   | 27. Mezis, A. N.       |
| 20. Bulin, A. S.       | 28. Okunev, G. S.      |
| 21. Beklichev, G. I.   | 29. Osepian, G. A.     |
| 22. Grishin, A. S.     | 30. Slavin, I. E.      |
| 23. Gugin, G. I.       | 31. Smirnov, P. A.     |
| 24. Ippo, B. M.        | 32. Shifres, A. A.     |
| 25. Kozhevnikov, S. N. | 32a. Khakhanian, G. D. |



## Corps Commander (Lieutenant General)

- |                             |                        |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 33. Alafuzo, M. I.          | 58. Kutiakov, I. S.    |
| 34. Appoga, E. F.           | 59. Lavrov, V. K.      |
| 35. Bazilevich, G. D.       | 60. Lapin, A. Ia.      |
| 36. Batorsky, M. A.         | 61. Levichev, V. N.    |
| 37. Bogomiagkov, S. N.      | 62. Lepin, E. D.       |
| 38. Vainer, L. Ia.          | 63. Lisovsky, N. V.    |
| 39. Vasilenko, M. I.        | 64. Longva, P. V.      |
| 40. Velikanov, M. D.        | 65. Mezheninov, S. A.  |
| 41. Gai (Bzhishkian), G. D. | 66. Mulin, V. M.       |
| 42. Gailit, Ia. P.          | 67. Petin, N. N.       |
| 43. Garkavyi, I. I.         | 68. Primakov, V. M.    |
| 44. Gekker, A. I.           | 69. Pugachev, S. A.    |
| 45. Germanovich, M. Ia.     | 70. Putna, V. K.       |
| 46. Gittis, V. M.           | 71. Sangursky, M. V.   |
| 47. Gorbachev, B. S.        | 72. Smolin, I. I.      |
| 48. Gribov, S. E.           | 73. Sokolov, V. N.     |
| 49. Griaznov, I. K.         | 74. Storozhenko, A. A. |
| 50. Efimov, N. A.           | 75. Stutska, K. A.     |
| 51. Zonberg, Zh. F.         | 76. Turovsky, S. A.    |
| 52. Ingaunis, F. A.         | 77. Uritsky, S. P.     |
| 53. Kalmykov, M. V.         | 78. Feldman, B. M.     |
| 54. Kovtiukh, E. I.         | 79. Fesenko, D. S.     |
| 55. Kosogov, I. D.          | 80. Khripin, V. V.     |
| 56. Krivoruchko, N. N.      | 81. Chaikovsky, K. A.  |
| 57. Kuibyshev, N. V.        | 82. Eideman, R. P.     |

## Corps Commissar (Lieutenant General)

- |                         |                         |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 83. Avinovitsky, Ia. L. | 95. Orlov, N. I.        |
| 84. Apse, M. Ia.        | 96. Petukhov, I. P.     |
| 85. Artuzov, A. Kh.     | 97. Prokovev, A. P.     |
| 86. Berezkin, M. F.     | 98. Rodionov, F. E.     |
| 87. Berzin, Ia. K.      | 99. Savko, N. A.        |
| 88. Vitte, A. M.        | 100. Sidorov, K. G.     |
| 89. Grinberg, I. M.     | 101. Troianker, B. U.   |
| 90. Gruber, L. Ia.      | 102. Khorosh, M. L.     |
| 91. Ilin, N. I.         | 103. Shestakov, V. N.   |
| 92. Karin, F. Ia.       | 104. Shteinbriuk, O. O. |
| 93. Nemerzelli, I. F.   | 105. Iartsev, A. P.     |
| 94. Neronov, I. G.      | 106. Iastrebov, G. G.   |

## Corps Engineer (Lieutenant General of Engineers)

107. Siniavsky, M. M.

## Corps Intendant (Lieutenant General)

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 108. Khlitsov, A. I. | 110. Oshlei, P. M. |
| 109. Kosich, D. I.   |                    |

## Corps Physician (Lieutenant General, Medical Services)

111. Baranov, M. I.

## Corps Veterinarian (Lieutenant General, Medical Services)

112. Nikolsky, N. M.

## Corps Military Jurist (Lieutenant General)

113. Rozovsky, N. P.

## Divisional Commander (Major General)

- |                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 114. Alksnis, Ia. Ia.      | 150. Davidovsky, Ia. L.     |
| 115. Andriiashev, L. P.    | 151. Dannenberg, E. E.      |
| 116. Aplok, Iu. Iu.        | 152. Demichev, M. A.        |
| 117. Artemenko, N. F.      | 153. Derevtsov, S. I.       |
| 118. Artemev, K. P.        | 154. Dikalov, E. P.         |
| 119. Atoian, A. T.         | 155. Dobrovolsky, V. P.     |
| 120. Bakshi, M. M.         | 156. Zamilatsky, G. S.      |
| 121. Balakirev, A. F.      | 157. Zinovev, I. Z.         |
| 122. Belitsky, S. M.       | 158. Ziuz-Iakovenko, Ia. I. |
| 123. Bely, S. O.           | 159. Ivanov, Ia. K.         |
| 124. Berggolts, A. I.      | 160. Inno, A. A.            |
| 125. Bergstrem, V. K.      | 161. Kazansky, E. S.        |
| 126. Blazhevich, I. F.     | 162. Kakurin, N. E.         |
| 127. Blomberg, Zh. K.      | 163. Kapulovsky, I. D.      |
| 128. Bobrov, B. I.         | 164. Karklin, I. I.         |
| 129. Bobrov, N. M.         | 165. Karpov, M. P.          |
| 130. Bokis, G. G.          | 166. Kassin, G. I.          |
| 131. Bondar, G. I.         | 167. Kariagin, G. B.        |
| 132. Borisenko, A. N.      | 168. Kaufeldt, F. P.        |
| 133. Brianskikh, P. A.     | 169. Kviatek, K. F.         |
| 134. Buachidze, F. M.      | 170. Kilvein, G. Ia.        |
| 135. Bukshtynovich, M. F.  | 171. Kniagnitsky, P. E.     |
| 136. Burichenkov, G. A.    | 172. Kozhevnikov, A. T.     |
| 137. Butyrsky, V. P.       | 173. Kozitsky, A. D.        |
| 138. Vakulich, P. I.       | 174. Kolsheiko, F. A.       |
| 139. Vasilev, F. V.        | 175. Korolev, D. K.         |
| 140. Ventsov-Krants, S. I. | 176. Kotov, N. Ia.          |
| 141. Vizirov, G. M.        | 177. Kokhansky, V. S.       |
| 142. Volpe, A. M.          | 178. Kuk, A. I.             |
| 143. Garf, V. E.           | 179. Kutateladze, G. N.     |
| 144. Germonius, V. E.      | 180. Kychinsky, D. A.       |
| 145. Golovkin, V. G.       | 181. Lazarevich, M. S.      |
| 146. Gorbunov, M. Iu.      | 182. Laur, Zh. I.           |
| 147. Goriachev, E. I.      | 183. Lopatin, V. N.         |
| 148. Grigor'ev, P. P.      | 184. Maksimov, I. F.        |
| 149. Grushetsky, V. F.     | 185. Maslov, K. V.          |

186. Mednikov, M. L.
187. Melik-Shakhnazarov, A. P.
188. Murzin, D. K.
189. Neiman, K. A.
190. Nikitin, S. V.
191. Nikiforov, L. I.
192. Nikonov, A. M.
193. Ovchinnikov, G. I.
194. Olshansky, M. M.
195. Olshevsky, F. I.
196. Pavlov, A. V.
197. Pashkovsky, K. K.
198. Peremytov, A. M.
199. Poga, Zh. Ia.
200. Pogrebnoy, V. S.
201. Pokus, Ia. Z.
202. Rakitin, N. V.
203. Raudmets, I. I.
204. Rink, I. A.
205. Rogalev, F. F.
206. Rogovsky, N. M.
207. Rokhi, V. Iu.
208. Rubinov, Ia. G.
209. Sablin, Iu. V.
210. Savitsky, S. M.
211. Savchenko, S. N.
212. Sazontov, A. Ia.
213. Svechin, A. A.
214. Semenov, N. G.
215. Serdich, D. F.
216. Sergeev, E. N.
217. Sidorenko, V. S.
218. Sokolov-Sokolovsky, P. L.
219. Sollogub, N. V.
220. Stepanov, V. A.
221. Stepanov, M. O.
222. Talkovsky, A. A.
223. Tarasenko, V. V.
224. Tarasov, A. I.
225. Testov, S. V.
226. Tkalun, P. P.
227. Tomashevich, I. A.
228. Tochenov, N. I.
229. Trizna, D. D.
230. Tukhareli, G. A.
231. Uvarov, N. M.
232. Ushakov, K. P.
233. Fedotov, A. V.
234. Firsov, D. S.
235. Florovsky, I. D.
236. Khoroshilov, I. Ia.
237. Chernobrovin, S. A.
238. Shalimo, M. N.
239. Sharskov, I. F.
240. Sheko, Ia. V.
241. Shiroky, I. F.
242. Shmidt, D. A.
243. Shcheglov, N. V.
244. Iushkevich, V. A.
245. Antonov, M. A.
246. Balchenko, R. L.
247. Barger, M. P.
248. Bauzer, F. D.
249. Blaushvili, N. K.
250. Bogdanov, P. P.
251. Boitsov, D. P.
252. Borovich, Ia. A.
253. Bocharov, L. P.
254. Vaineros, I. D.
255. Genin, Ia. F.
256. Gladyshev, N. Ia.
257. Gorin, G. I.
258. Gornostaev, I. M.
259. Zaitsev, V. E.
260. Zeldovich, M. E.
261. Zemskov, S. I.
262. Zilbert, L. I.
263. Zinovev, G. A.
264. Ivanov, S. E.
265. Indrikson, Ia. G.
266. Isaenko, M. G.
267. Kavalers, P. E.
268. Kalpus, B. A.
269. Kamensky, P. G.
270. Kolotilov, V. N.
271. Konovalov, V. F.
272. Kropachev, A. M.
273. Lavrov, M. V.
274. Levenzon, F. Ia.
275. Markov, G. N.
276. Minchuk, A. I.
277. Mirovitsky, P. V.

- |                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 278. Mustafin, I. A.      | 294. Slavinsky, K. E.    |
| 279. Nevraev, G. F.       | 295. Smolensky, Ia. L.   |
| 280. Ozol, V. K.          | 296. Sokolenko, F. N.    |
| 281. Padarin, N. I.       | 297. Suslov, P. V.       |
| 282. Pismanik, G. E.      | 298. Tarutinsky, A. V.   |
| 283. Plau, D. D.          | 299. Udilov, P. S.       |
| 284. Rabinovich, I. Iu.   | 300. Usatenko, A. V.     |
| 285. Rabinovich, S. Z.    | 301. Feldman, P. M.      |
| 286. Rittel, G. I.        | 302. Kharitonov, Kh. Kh. |
| 287. Saakov, O. A.        | 303. Khromenko, A. N.    |
| 288. Safronov, I. V.      | 304. Tsarev, Ia. T.      |
| 289. Svinkin, I. A.       | 305. Shimanovsky, G. S.  |
| 290. Serpukhovitin, V. V. | 306. Shchegolev, L. I.   |
| 291. Simonov, M. E.       | 307. Iung, N. A.         |
| 292. Skortsov, S. A.      | 308. Iakubovsky, L. G.   |
| 293. Slavin, M. E.        |                          |

## Divisional Engineer (Major General-Engineer)

- |                      |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 309. Aksenov, A. M.  | 313. Bordovsky, S. V. |
| 310. Andreev, E. S.  | 314. Konnert, V. S.   |
| 311. Bandin, A. P.   | 315. Polischuk, K. E. |
| 312. Barkalov, E. A. | 316. Potapov, G. Kh.  |

## Divisional Intendant (Major General)

- |                        |                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 317. Ankudinov, I. Ia. | 326. Kniazev, P. G.           |
| 318. Bakov, P. G.      | 327. Kurkov, P. I.            |
| 319. Bekker, S. I.     | 328. Maksimov, S. M.          |
| 320. Vanag, A. Ia.     | 329. Matson-Krashinsky, O. P. |
| 321. Gorshkov, V. S.   | 330. Peterson, R. A.          |
| 322. Gurev, K. P.      | 331. Proshkin, I. G.          |
| 323. Dzydza, G. A.     | 332. Sokolov, A. M.           |
| 324. Zuev, N. N.       | 333. Stankovsky, N. V.        |
| 325. Ivanov, B. N.     | 334. Fedorov, V. E.           |

## Divisional Physician (Major General, Medical Service)

- |                          |                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 335. Kiuchariants, A. G. | 336. Rainer, B. A. |
|--------------------------|--------------------|

## Divisional Veterinarian (Major General, Medical Service)

- |                    |                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 337. Vlasov, N. M. | 338. Petukhovsky, A. A. |
|--------------------|-------------------------|

## Brigade Commander (Brigadier General)\*

- |                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 339. Agladze, L. M.   | 344. Antonov, P. I.     |
| 340. Alekseev, P. G.  | 345. Arsenev, B. N.     |
| 341. Alekhin, E. S.   | 346. Ausem-Orlov, V. V. |
| 342. Andrianov, N. G. | 347. Afonsky, V. L.     |
| 343. Androsiuk, N. I. | 348. Bazhanov, N. N.    |



349. Bazenkov, B. I.  
350. Balabin, B. N.  
351. Batenin, V. N.  
352. Bakhrushin, A. M.  
353. Bebris, I. G.  
354. Blium, I. E.  
355. Blium, N. Ia.  
356. Bolotkov, M. I.  
357. Bondariuk, G. M.  
358. Borisov, A. B.  
359. Buzanov, D. I.  
360. Biuler, V. A.  
361. Vainerkh, D. A.  
362. Vasilchenko, N. N.  
363. Vasnetsovich, V. K.  
364. Varfolomeev, N. E.  
365. Vishnerevsky, V. A.  
366. Volkov, G. D.  
367. Voronokov, V. M.  
368. Viazemsky, M. F.  
369. Gavrichenko, F. N.  
370. Gavriushenko, G. F.  
371. Genin, V. M.  
372. Glagolev, V. P.  
373. Golikov, A. G.  
374. Gorev, V. E.  
375. Gorshkov, B. N.  
376. Goffe, A. I.  
377. Gravin, N. M.  
378. Grachev, V. G.  
379. Grechanik, A. I.  
380. Grosberg, I. K.  
381. Grudiaev, P. I.  
382. Gudkov, D. I.  
383. Guskov, N. F.  
384. Daniliuk, G. S.  
385. Dashichev, I. F.  
386. Dobrolezh, A. G.  
387. Dotol, F. K.  
388. Dragilev, V. G.  
389. Drozdov, A. K.  
390. Diakov, V. A.  
391. Evdokimov, Ia. K.  
392. Evseev, N. F.  
393. Egorov, N. G.  
394. Emelnov, P. V.  
395. Zhabin, N. I.  
396. Zhivin, N. I.  
397. Zhigur, Ia. M.  
398. Zhitov, A. A.  
399. Zhorkov, V. A.  
400. Zaitsev, A. S.  
401. Zaks, Ia. E.  
402. Zalevsky, A. I.  
403. Zaporozhchenko, M. I.  
404. Zakhoder, V. N.  
405. Zubok, A. E.  
406. Zybin, S. P.  
407. Ivanov, S. I.  
408. Ignatov, N. G.  
409. Igneus-Matson, E. G.  
410. Ikonostasov, V. M.  
411. Kagan, M. A.  
412. Kalvan, I. I.  
413. Kaptsevich, G. A.  
414. Karev, G. S.  
415. Karmaliuk, F. F.  
416. Kartaev, L. V.  
417. Kasinov, S. M.  
418. Kevlishvili, P. G.  
419. Keiris, R. I.  
420. Kirichenko, I. G.  
421. Kiselev, M. F.  
422. Kit-Vaitenko, I. P.  
423. Klein-Burzin, V. A.  
424. Klementev, V. G.  
425. Klochko, I. G.  
426. Kliava, K. Iu.  
427. Kovalev, D. M.  
428. Kozlovsky, V. N.  
429. Kolesnichenko, M. Ia.  
430. Koltunov, I. S.  
431. Kolchuk, F. S.  
432. Konovalov, L. I.  
433. Korobov, I. A.  
434. Korchits, V. V.  
435. Kosiakin, V. V.  
436. Kosmatov, A. V.  
437. Kruk, I. M.  
438. Kuzmmichev, B. I.  
439. Kuznetsov, I. I.  
440. Kunitsky, I. F.

441. Kushakov, V. A.
442. Labas, A. A.
443. Lavinovskikh, B. Ia.
444. Lakovnikov, P. I.
445. Lapchinsky, A. N.
446. Lakhinsky, K. K.
447. Letsky, G. I.
448. Lunev, D. D.
449. Lunev, P. M.
450. Lukin, E. D.
451. Liubimov, V. V.
452. Mager, M. P.
453. Magon, E. Ia.
454. Malovsky, A. D.
455. Malofeev, V. I.
456. Malyshev, A. K.
457. Malyshev, G. F.
458. Malyshev, V. F.
459. Mamonov, P. D.
460. Markevich, N. L.
461. Martynovsky, S. L.
462. Marchenko, P. G.
463. Matuzenko, A. I.
464. Makhrov, N. S.
465. Medvedev, M. E.
466. Mediansky, M. S.
467. Meier, A. P.
468. Mernov, V. I.
469. Meshkov, A. T.
470. Miliunas, I. A.
471. Mironov, A. M.
472. Mishuk, N. I.
473. Mozolevsky, V. A.
474. Molodtsov, P. P.
475. Mosin, A. N.
476. Muev, D. D.
477. Murtazin, M. L.
478. Nakhichevsky, D. D.
479. Neborak, A. A.
480. Nesterovsky, N. A.
481. Nikulin, I. E.
482. Obysov, S. P.
483. Ogorodnikov, F. E.
484. Orlov, A. G.
485. Ostrovsky, A. I.
486. Pavlov, P. A.
487. Pavlovsky, V. I.
488. Pavlovsky, K. V.
489. Petrenko-Lunev, S. V.
490. Petrov, M. I.
491. Petrov, M. O.
492. Petrushevich, B. V.
493. Podshivalov, V. I.
494. Podshivalov, I. M.
495. Pozniakov, S. V.
496. Polunov, M. L.
497. Poliakov, V. I.
498. Poliakov, N. S.
499. Poliansky, N. A.
500. Potanepko, P. R.
501. Prokopchuk, N. A.
502. Rataush, R. K.
503. Rachinsky, N. I.
504. Reztsov, V. I.
505. Rozyenko, A. F.
506. Rosman, I. D.
507. Rudenko, D. M.
508. Rudinsky, N. S.
509. Rulev, P. P.
510. Rybakov, M. A.
511. Rybkin, P. D.
512. Ryzhenkov, M. M.
513. Samoilov, I. Ia.
514. Satin, A. I.
515. Svechnikov, M. S.
516. Selivanov, V. V.
517. Semenov, N. A.
518. Seredin, V. P.
519. Serpukhov, M. S.
520. Skulachenko, A. E.
521. Smirnov, S. S.
522. Sokolov, A. D.
523. Sokolov, A. N.
524. Sokolov, G. I.
525. Sokolov-Strakhov, K. I.
526. Solomatin, M. D.
527. Sonin, K. A.
528. Sorokin, Ia. V.
529. Stakhansky, N. M.
530. Stoilov, A. G.
531. Suleiman, N. A.
532. Suslov, A. A.

533. Scheskulevich, A. S.  
 534. Sysoev, P. V.  
 535. Tantlevsky, E. B.  
 536. Tarnovsky-Tarletsky, A. M.  
 537. Titov, A. P.  
 538. Tikhomirov, E. M.  
 539. Tikhomirov, P. P.  
 540. Tishchenko, Z. P.  
 541. Tkachev, M. L.  
 542. Tolkachev, F. A.  
 543. Trifonov, A. P.  
 544. Trukhanov, N. F.  
 545. Turchak, V. M.  
 546. Tylytn, A. M.  
 547. Ulasevich, S. A.  
 548. Ulman, Zh. K.  
 549. Fedin, A. T.  
 550. Fedorov, N. F.  
 551. Fesenko, P. G.  
 552. Fogel, I. I.  
 553. Fokin, I. V.  
 554. Tsiemgal, A. I.  
 555. Chernov, F. M.  
 556. Chernozatonsky, L. N.  
 557. Cherny, I. I.  
 558. Cherniavsky, M. L.  
 559. Shafransky, I. O.  
 560. Shashkin, V. V.  
 561. Sheideman, E. S.  
 562. Shipov, V. F.  
 563. Shmai-Kreitsberg, A. I.  
 564. Shoshkin, M. A.  
 565. Shuvalikov, V. V.  
 566. Iakimov, M. M.  
 567. Iakimov, M. P.  
 568. Iakubov, R. A.

**Brigade Engineer\***

569. Aleksandrov, V. V.  
 570. Alliluev, P. S.  
 571. Argentov, A. A.  
 572. Bruevich, N. G.  
 573. Venttsel, D. A.  
 574. Geveling, N. V.  
 575. Gruzdup, A. Kh.  
 576. Demianovsky, V. V.  
 577. Zhelezniakov, Ia. M.  
 578. Zhukov, L. I.  
 579. Zhukovsky, I. P.  
 580. Zhukovsky, N. I.  
 581. Zemsky, B. M.  
 582. Isakov, K. V.  
 583. Iudin, S. D.  
 584. Kozlov, S. G.  
 585. Kokadeev, A. N.  
 586. Lastochkin, A. F.  
 587. Lilienfeld, A. E.  
 588. Maksimov, N. A.  
 589. Mogilevkin, V. N.  
 590. Novikov, L. V.  
 591. Ogloblin, A. P.  
 592. Pavlov, I. S.  
 593. Petrov, O. D.  
 594. Sakrier, I. F.  
 595. Saravaisky, S. A.  
 596. Sviridov, V. D.  
 597. Stepanov, Iu. A.  
 598. Faivush, Ia. A.  
 599. Fedorov, I. A.  
 600. Khandrikov, V. P.  
 601. Kheil, I. G.  
 602. Shapiro, S. G.

**Brigade Intendant\***

603. Abol, E. F.  
 604. Blinov, S. V.  
 605. Buznikov, A. D.  
 606. Vitkovsky, P. P.  
 607. Gludin, I. I.  
 608. Evtushenko, N. N.  
 609. Zafran, I. I.  
 610. Kalinin, S. I.  
 611. Klatovsky, N. A.  
 612. Kupriukhin, A. M.  
 613. Pevzner, I. B.  
 614. Pertsovsky, Z. D.  
 615. Petrovich, N. G.  
 616. Pretter, K. A.

617. Satterup, D. V.

619. Chibar, Ia. A.

618. Trukhanin, M. Z.

620. Shchetinin, P. A.

\*There is no such rank in the Soviet Armed forces now. When the new rank nomenclature was introduced in 1940, those brigade commanders who had escaped the repressions received the title of major-general. A few of the brigade commanders who returned from the camps (Isserson, G. S., Tsalkovich, I. M., et al.) were made colonels.



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## II. Higher Naval Commanders Who Died in the Repressions of 1937-1939

### Flagman of the Fleet First Class (Admiral of the Fleet)

- |                    |                 |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Viktorov, M. V. | 2. Orlov, V. M. |
|--------------------|-----------------|

### Flagman of the Fleet Second Class (Admiral)

- |                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 3. Kozhanov, I. K. | 4. Muklevich, R. A. |
|--------------------|---------------------|

### Flagman First Class (Vice Admiral)

- |                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5. Dushenov, K. I.        | 8. Ludri, I. M.          |
| 6. Kadatsky-Rudnev, I. N. | 9. Pantserzhansky, E. S. |
| 7. Kireev, G. P.          |                          |

### Flagman Second Class (Rear Admiral)

- |                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 10. Vasilev, A. V.     | 15. Ozolin, Ia. I.   |
| 11. Vasilev, G. V.     | 16. Samborsky, E. K. |
| 12. Vinogradsky, G. G. | 17. Sivkov, A. K.    |
| 13. Galkin, G. P.      | 18. Smirnov, P. I.   |
| 14. Isakov, D. P.      |                      |

### Flagman-Engineer Second Class (Rear Admiral, Engineer)

19. Aliakrinsky, N. V.

### Flagman-Engineer Third Class\*

- |                              |                          |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 20. Antsipo-Chikunsky, L. V. | 26. Miroshkin, A. F.     |
| 21. Brykin, A. E.            | 27. Motorny, I. D.       |
| 22. Vasilev, V. V.           | 28. Platonov, A. P.      |
| 23. Gorbunov, N. I.          | 29. Posazhennikov, A. D. |
| 24. Gorshkov, V. A.          | 30. Rashevich, F. K.     |
| 25. Messer, P. V.            | 31. Khait, N. M.         |

\*This corresponds to the brigade level of the land forces. See explanation (\*) of these ranks in appendix I.

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### III. Higher Command Staff Personnel Freed and Rehabilitated After the June Plenum of the TsK of 1957

This list is incomplete. There should be approximately fifteen men in this category, but we were not able to confirm the others.

There was also a large group of commanders, who were repressed but freed before the war and who participated in combat action. Among them were Marshal K. K. Rokossovsky, General of the Army A. V. Gorbatov, Lieutenant Generals L. G. Petrovsky, G. D. Stelmakh, and others; altogether seventy men.

Name	Rank at the time of arrest	Rank after rehabilitation
1. Todorsky, A. I.	Corps commander	Lieutenant-general
2. Govorukhin, T. K.	Corps commissar	Major-general
3. Fishman, Ia. M.	Corps engineer	Major-general, engineer
4. Melkumov, Ia. A.	Division commander	Colonel
5. Kolosov, P. I.	Division commissar	Major-general
6. Isserson, G. S.	Brigade commander	Colonel
7. Iungmeister, V. A.	Brigade commander	Colonel
8. Tsalkovich, I. M.	Brigade engineer	Colonel, engineer

## IV

Table 1. Changes on the Top Level of the People's Commissariat of Defense of the USSR, June 20, 1934–June 22, 1941

Position	Names and dates	
People's Commissar of Defense	K. E. Voroshilov to May 6, 1940	S. K. Timoshenko from May 6, 1940
First Deputy (from August 1940, Deputy); Chief of the Main Political Directorate	<i>Ya. B. Gamarnik</i> <sup>1</sup> to May 31, 1937 L. Z. Mekhlis <sup>2</sup> December 1937– September 1940	P. A. Smirnov July 15–December 1937 A. I. Zaporozhets from October 7, 1940
First Deputy	<i>M. N. Tukhachevsky</i> <sup>3</sup> April 9, 1936– May 11, 1937 I. F. Fedko January 25– July 7, 1938	<i>A. I. Egorov</i> <sup>4</sup> May 11, 1937– January 21, 1938 S. M. Budenny from August 15, 1940
Deputy; Chief of the General Staff (from 1936)	A. I. Egorov to May 11, 1937  K. A. Meretskov August 15, 1940– February 1941	B. M. Shaposhnikov May 11, 1937– August 15, 1940 G. K. Zhukov from February 1941
Deputy; Chief of Armaments	M. N. Tukhachevsky to April 9, 1936  G. I. Kulik from May 26, 1937	<i>A. I. Khalepsky</i> <sup>5</sup> April 9, 1936– April 4, 1937
Deputy	K. A. Meretskov June 7–August 15, 1940; from February 1941	
Deputy	B. M. Shaposhnikov from August 15, 1940	

Table I. (continued)

Position	Names and dates	
Deputy, Intelligence; Chief of the Fifth Main Directorate	<i>I. I. Proskurov</i> <sup>6</sup> April 14, 1939– July 27, 1940	
Deputy (from January 1937); Chief of the Air Force	<i>Ya. I. Alksnis</i> to November 24, 1937	<i>A. D. Loktionov</i> <sup>7</sup> November 28, 1937– July 11, 1940
	<i>Ya. V. Smushkevich</i> <sup>8</sup> July 20–August 28, 1940	<i>P. V. Rychagov</i> August 28, 1940– April 1941 <i>P. F. Zhigarev</i> from April 1941
Deputy, Cadre	<i>E. A. Shchadenko</i> <sup>9</sup> January 1938– December 6, 1940	
Deputy (from January 1937); Chief of the Naval Forces	<i>V. M. Orlov</i> to June 15, 1937	<i>M. V. Viktorov</i> August 15– November 1937
People's Commissar of the Navy (from December 30, 1937)	<i>P. A. Smirnov</i> to November 1938	<i>M. P. Frinovsky</i> November 1938–March 1939
	<i>N. G. Kuznetsov</i> from March 1939	

Key: Italicized names indicate arrested and perished.

1. By order of the People's Commissar of Defense of May 31, 1937, Gamarnik was "removed from his post, expelled from the Military Council, and discharged from the RKKA as a person having close group links with Yakir, who was recently expelled from the Party for his participation in a fascist military conspiracy." Gamarnik shot himself on the same day.

2. In September 1940 appointed Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and People's Commissar of State Control.

3. On May 11, 1937, appointed Commander of the Volga Military District. Arrested on May 26.

4. On January 25, 1938, appointed Commander of the Trans-Caucasus Military District. On February 25 was discharged from the RKKA by the reason of illness. Arrested and perished.

5. Nominally was not a Deputy People's Commissar. On April 4, 1937, was appointed People's Commissar of Communications. Arrested and perished.

6. On September 6, 1940, appointed Deputy Air Force Commander of the Far East Front. From October 23 he was Deputy Chief of the Air Force of the Red Army,



Long-range Bombardment Aviation. Was arrested in January 1941; perished.

7. Appointed Commander of the Baltic Military District. Arrested in January 1941; perished.

8. On August 15, 1940, appointed Inspector General of the Air Force; on December 3, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Aviation. Arrested in January 1941; perished.

9. Dismissed by the decision of the plenary session of the Central Committee, but reinstated in the same post after the beginning of the war.

Table 2. Administration of Military Districts and Fleets,  
June 20, 1934–June 22, 1941

District and position		Names and dates	
Arkhangelsk Military District (MD) formed in 1940			
1. Commander	N. V. Kurdyumov March–April 1940	V. Ya. Kachalov from June 1940	
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	N. N. Vashugin March–April 1940	N. N. Klementiev May–December 1940	
3. Chief of Staff	P. A. Ivanov March–April 1940	P. G. Egorov from June 1940	
Belorussian MD since 1939—Belorussian Special; since 1940—Western Special			
1. Commander	<i>I. P. Uborevich</i> to May 11, 1937  D. G. Pavlov from June 1940	<i>I. P. Belov</i> June 5, 1937– April 1938	M. P. Kovalev April 1938– April 11, 1940
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	P. A. Smirnov to November 29, 1935  I. V. Rogov September 10, 1938–March 25, 1939	A. S. Bulin November 29, 1935–April 15, 1937  I. Z. Susaikov March 27, 1939– February 11, 1940	F. I. Golikov December 30, 1937–September 10, 1938  Ya. A. Fominykh from June 7, 1940
3. Chief of Staff	K. A. Meretskov to December 1934  M. A. Purkaev April 3, 1938– August 31, 1939 V. E. Klimovskikh from July 27, 1940	<i>B. I. Bobrov</i> January 23, 1935– May 31, 1937  V. E. Klimovskikh September 27, 1939–March 1940	<i>A. I. Peremytov</i> June 28, 1937– March 1938  M. A. Purkaev March 1940– July 26, 1940
Transbaycal MD formed in 1935 from the Far Eastern Red Army			
1. Commander	<i>I. K. Gryaznov</i>	<i>M. D. Velikanov</i>	M. G. Efremov

Table 2. (continued)

District and position	Names and dates		
	June 1, 1935– July 1937 Y. F. Yakovlev June 29, 1938– June 22, 1939 L. A. Kurochkin from February 1941	July 9–November 1937 S. K. Remezov June 11, 1940	November 1937– April 29, 1938 I. S. Konev July 22, 1940– February 1941
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	V. N. Shestakov June 1, 1935– July 1937 G. A. Vasilyev February– December 1938 K. N. Zimin from February 1941	A. S. Chcherbakov July 9–October 1937 D. A. Gapanovich December 1938– December 1939	A. M. Bitte October 1937– January 28, 1938 D. S. Leonov January 1940– February 1941
3. Chief of Staff	Ya. G. Rubinov May 1, 1935– June 16, 1937 E. G. Trotsenko from February 1941	A. I. Tarasov January 1940	P. K. Korytnikov January 1940– February 1941
Transcaucasus MD formed in 1935 from Caucasus Red Army			
1. Commander	M. K. Levandovsky to June 10, 1937  I. V. Tulenev March 8, 1938– September 3, 1940	N. V. Kuibyshev June 10, 1937– February 4, 1938 M. G. Efremov September 3, 1940–February 1941	A. I. Egorov February 4– February 21, 1938 D. G. Kozlov from February 1941
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	A. P. Yartsev to August 26, 1937  A. Ya. Doronin June 24, 1938– December 1940	M. Ya. Apse September 18, 1937–December 30, 1937 F. A. Shamanin from December 1940	P. N. Figin December 30, 1937–June 24, 1938
3. Chief of Staff	M. I. Alfuzo <sup>k</sup> to February 11,	S. M. Savitsky February 11,	V. N. Lvov July 17, 1937–

Table 2. (continued)

District and position		Names and dates	
	1935	1935–May 25, 1937	April 17, 1938
	A. A. Khriashchev April 17, 1938– August 2, 1938	F. I. Tolbukhin from August 3, 1938	
Kalininsky MD			
formed in 1938; disbanded in 1940			
1. Commander	I. V. Boldin August 1938– October 1939	V. F. Yakovlev October 1939– June 1940	
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	A. V. Sokolin September 1938– July 1939	A. S. Nikolaiev July 11, 1939– June 1940	I. Z. Susaikov June–July 1940
3. Chief of Staff	E. G. Trotsenko August 1938– December 1939	V. N. Gordov December 1939– June 1940	
Kiev MD			
to 1935 Ukrainian; from 1939 Kiev Special District			
1. Commander	<i>I. E. Yakir</i> to May 11, 1937	<i>I. F. Fedko</i> <sup>2</sup> May 26, 1937– January 21, 1938	S. K. Timoshenko January 21, 1938– May 1940
	G. K. Zhukov May 1940– January 1941	M. P. Kirponos from January 1941	
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	<i>N. P. Amelin</i> to May 11, 1937	E. A. Shchadenko May 22, 1937– January 7, 1938	A. K. Smirnov January 7, 1938– April 3, 1938
	<i>M. N. Poliakov</i> April–December 1938	A. S. Nikolaiev December 1938– July 11, 1938	V. N. Borisov July 11– September 16, 1939
	S. K. Kozhevnikov September 16, 1939–August 1940	N. N. Vashugin from November 1940	
3. Chief of Staff	<i>D. A. Kuchinsky</i> <sup>3</sup> to May 11, 1936	<i>V. P. Butyrsky</i> May 14, 1936– April 25, 1937	N. I. Podchufarov April 25, 1937– July 23, 1937



Table 2. (continued)

District and position	Names and dates		
	I. G. Zakharkin July 23, 1937– May 27, 1938 M. A. Pukarev from July 26, 1940	I. V. Smorodinov May 27, 1938– October 27, 1938	N. F. Vatutin October 27, 1938– July 26, 1940
Leningrad MD			
1. Commander	I. P. Belov to October 17, 1935  M. S. Khozin April 3, 1938– February 13, 1939 M. M. Popov from February 1941	B. M. Shaposhnikov October 29, 1935– May 11, 1937 K. A. Meretskov February 13, 1939–July 3, 1940	<i>P. E. Dybenko</i> June 7, 1937– January 6, 1938  M. P. Kirponos July 3, 1940– January 1941
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	<i>I. E. Slavin</i> <sup>4</sup> to October 17, 1935	<i>P. A. Smirnov</i> <sup>5</sup> December 2, 1935–June 1937	T. K. Govorukhin <sup>6</sup> June 7, 1937– September 17, 1938
3. Chief of Staff	N. N. Vashugin October 9, 1938– March 1940	T. F. Shtykov March–November 1940	N. N. Klementiev from February 1941
	<i>Ya. I. Zuz-Yakovenko</i> <sup>k</sup> to June 1935 N. E. Chibisov June 1, 1938– July 9, 1940	<i>A. V. Fedotov</i> October 21, 1935– June 1937 <i>P. G. Ponedelin</i> July 9, 1940– October 1940	M. V. Zakharov July 19, 1937– May 31, 1938
Moscow MD			
1. Commander	<i>A. I. Kork</i> <sup>7</sup> to September 29, 1935  I. V. Tulenev from August 14, 1940	I. P. Belov September 29, 1935–May 31, 1937	S. M. Budenny June 8, 1937– August 14, 1940
2. Head of Political	<i>G. I. Veklichev</i>	L. N. Aronshtam	B. U. Troyanker

Table 2. (continued)

District and position		Names and dates	
District (member of the District Military Council)	to August 1936	December 13, 1936–May 20, 1937	May 31, 1937–November 20, 1937
	S. E. Kolonin February 26, 1937–February 24, 1938	L. G. Petrovsky <sup>8</sup> February 24, 1938–March 16, 1938	A. I. Zaporozhets April 16, 1938–September 20, 1940
	V. N. Bogatkin from September 24, 1940		
3. Chief of Staff	A. M. Volpe <sup>9</sup> to May 1935	V. A. Stepanov <sup>k</sup> May 1935–May 20, 1936	A. M. Peremytov May 28, 1936–June 28, 1937
	A. I. Antonov July 5, 1937–April 6, 1938	V. D. Sokolovsky April 17, 1938–February 1941	G. D. Shishenin from February 1941
Odessa MD formed in 1939			
1. Commander	I. V. Boldin October 1939–July 11, 1940	Ya. T. Cherevichenko from July 11, 1940	
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	A. F. Kolobiakov from October 1939		
3. Chief of Staff	P. I. Liapin October 1939–July 11, 1940	M. V. Zakharov from July 11, 1940	
Orlov MD formed in 1938			
1. Commander	M. G. Efremov July 1938–June 1940	F. N. Remezov from June 11, 1940	
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	I. Z. Susaikov September 2, 1938–March 27, 1939	F. A. Semenovskiy from March 27, 1939	

Table 2. (continued)

District and position	Names and dates		
3. Chief of Staff	A. D. Kornev from July 1938		
Baltic MD formed in 1940			
1. Commander	A. D. Loktionov July 11, 1940– December 25, 1940	F. I. Kuznetsov from December 25, 1940	
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	I. Z. Susaikov July 13, 1940– December 25, 1940	P. A. Dibrova from February 1941	
3. Chief of Staff	P. S. Klienov from July 11, 1940		
Volga MD			
1. Commander	P. E. Dybenko to May 11, 1937	M. N. Tukhachevsky May 11–May 26, 1937	M. G. Efremov June 5–December 1937
	P. A. Brianskikh December 1937– October 1938 V. F. Gerasimenko from July 1940	K. A. Meretskoy October 1938– February 1939	T. I. Shevaldin ? February 1939– July 1940
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	P. A. Smirnov to February 1934  L. A. Balychenko August 1937– September 1938 S. I. Kolonin from February 1941	A. I. Mezis February 1934– May 11, 1937  A. Ya. Fominykh September 1938– July 22, 1939	L. N. Aronshtam May 11–May 31, 1937  A. S. Zheltov July 1939– February 1941
3. Chief of Staff	N. V. Lisovsky <sup>k</sup> to April 1936  V. N. Gordov from July 1940	N. E. Varfolomeev April 1936– March 1938	P. S. Klenov April 1938– July 1940

Table 2. (continued)

District and position		Names and dates	
North Caucasus MD			
1. Commander	<i>N. D. Kashirin</i> <sup>k</sup> to May 5, 1937	<i>S. E. Gribov</i> September 3, 1937–January 9, 1938	V. Ya. Kachalov March 16, 1938– June 11, 1940
	M. G. Efremov June 11, 1940– August 15, 1940	F. I. Kuznetsov August 15, 1940– December 25, 1940	I. S. Konev January–June 1941
	M. A. Reiter from June 1941		
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	<i>S. N. Kozhevnikov</i> <sup>k</sup> to August 1936	<i>G. I. Veklichev</i> August 1936– June 1937	<i>A. P. Prokofiev</i> June–August 1937
	<i>K. G. Sidorov</i> August–November 1937	K. N. Zimin November 27, 1937–March 21, 1938	I. P. Shekhanov from March 27, 1938
3. Chief of Staff	<i>P. I. Vakulich</i> <sup>k</sup> to June 1, 1936	<i>S. P. Tsvetkov</i> June 1936– August 1937	D. N. Nikishov August 1937– August 15, 1940
	S. G. Trofimenko August 15, 1940– February 1941	V. M. Zlobin from February 1941	
Siberian MD			
1. Commander	<i>Ya. P. Gailit</i> to May 11, 1937	M. A. Antoniuk June 25, 1937– June 2, 1938	S. A. Kalinin from July 17, 1938
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	<i>A. P. Prokofiev</i> <sup>k</sup> to May 31, 1937	<i>N. A. Yung</i> August 22– December 1937	P. K. Smirnov from December 30, 1937
3. Chief of Staff	<i>M. S. Serpokrylov</i> <sup>k</sup> to January 1935	<i>I. Z. Zinoviev</i> January 23, 1935– July 1937	M. F. Lukin January 1938– January 2, 1940
	P. E. Glinsky from January 2, 1940		



Table 2. (continued)

District and position	Names and dates		
Central Asian MD			
1. Commander	<i>M. D. Velikanov</i> to June 15, 1937  <i>L. G. Petrovsky</i> December 19, 1937–March 10, 1938	<i>I. K. Gryaznov</i> July 3–August 10, 1937 <i>I. R. Apanasenko</i> March 10, 1938– December 31, 1940	<i>A. D. Loktionov</i> August 20– December 17, 1937 <i>S. G. Trofimenko</i> from January 14, 1941
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	<i>G. G. Yastrebov</i> to May 8, 1937  <i>M. S. Petrenko</i> ? October 26, 1938– April 19, 1940	<i>D. D. Bauzer</i> August 20– November 16, 1937 <i>E. P. Rykov</i> April 19, 1940– December 31, 1940	<i>K. L. Pantas</i> January 28– October 8, 1938 ??
3. Chief of Staff	<i>G. S. Zamilitsky</i> to May 19, 1937  ??	<i>A. K. Malyshev</i> May 23, 1937– March 31, 1938	<i>M. I. Kazakov</i> April 10, 1938– December 31, 1940
Ural MD			
1. Commander	<i>I. I. Garkavy</i> to March 1937  <i>G. P. Sofronov</i> August 11, 1937– July 15, 1938	<i>B. S. Gorbachev</i> March 22–April 17, 1937 <i>F. A. Ershakov</i> from July 15, 1938	<i>Ya. P. Gailit</i> May 19–August 1937
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	<i>G. A. Zinoviev</i> to August 14, 1937  <i>D. S. Leonov</i> March 19, 1939– December 1940	<i>A. V. Tarutinsky</i> August 14– December 1937 ??	<i>T. A. Nicolaev</i> December 30, 1937–March 1939
3. Chief of Staff	<i>V. D. Sokolovsky</i> to April 3, 1938	<i>A. M. Markov</i> ? April 9, 1938– August 19, 1938	<i>G. F. Zakharov</i> from August 19, 1938
Kharkov MD formed in 1935			
1. Commander	<i>I. N. Dubovoy</i> July 1935–	<i>S. K. Timoshenko</i> November 1937–	<i>I. K. Smirnov</i> ? April 1938–

Table 2. (continued)

District and position		Names and dates	
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	June 1937	February 1938	April 11, 1940
	M. P. Kovaliev	A. N. Chernikov	
	April 11, 1940–February 1941	from February 1941	
	M. F. Berezkin <sup>k</sup>	S. N. Kozhevnikov	E. A. Shchadenko
3. Chief of Staff	May–September 1935	September 1935–November 1936	December 1936–January 1937
	K. I. Ozolin	T. P. Krugliakov ?	T. L. Nikolaiev ??
	August–November 1937	January 1938–March 1939	March 1939–April 1940
	P. L. Sokolov	K. N. Galitsky	I. V. Smorodinov
	July 1935–June 1937	August–November 1937	November 1937–May 27, 1938
	P. G. Zakharkin	P. I. Tupikov	
	May 27, 1938–July 1938	April 28, 1939	

Detached Red Banner Far Eastern Army  
from April 28, 1938—Far Eastern Red Banner Front; disbanded September 4, 1938

1. Commander	V. K. Blyukher		
	to September 4, 1938		
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	L. N. Aronshtam	G. D. Khakhanian	P. I. Mazepov
	to December 13, 1936	February 1, 1937–April 20, 1938	April 20, 1938–September 4, 1938
3. Chief of Staff	I. V. Sangursky <sup>10</sup>	K. A. Meretskov	S. N. Bogomyagkov
	to December 25, 1934	December 25, 1934–March 22, 1936	March 22, 1936–February 8, 1938
	G. M. Shtern		
	April 3–September 4, 1938		

First Detached Red Banner Army  
formed September 4, 1938; disbanded July 1, 1940

1. Commander	G. M. Shtern	M. M. Popov
	September 4, 1938–July 1, 1939	July 1, 1939–July 1, 1940

Table 2. (continued)

District and position	Names and dates	
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	F. A. Semenovskiy	?? September 4, 1938–March 24, 1939
3. Chief of Staff	M. M. Popov	G. A. Shelekhov September 4, 1938–July 1, 1939 July 1, 1939– July 1, 1940
Second Detached Red Banner Army formed September 4, 1938; disbanded July 1, 1940		
1. Commander	I. S. Konev	September 4, 1938–July 1, 1940
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	N. I. Biryukov	A. Ya. Fominykh September 4, 1938–July 22, 1939 July 22, 1939– July 1, 1940
3. Chief of Staff	K. S. Melnik	E. G. Trotsenko
Chita Front Group (Khal'Khan Gol) formed July 5, 1939; disbanded July 1, 1940		
1. Commander	G. M. Shtern <sup>11</sup>	July 5, 1939– October 1939
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	N. I. Biryukov	July 5, 1939– July 1, 1940
3. Chief of Staff	P. G. Kuznetsov	July 5, 1939– July 1, 1940
Far Eastern Front formed July 1, 1940		
1. Commander	??	I. R. Apanasenko from January 1941
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	N. I. Biryukov	from July 1, 1940

Table 2. (continued)

District and position		Names and dates	
3. Chief of Staff	P. G. Kuznetsov from July 1, 1940		
Baltic Fleet			
1. Commander	L. M. Galler	A. K. Sivkov to July 1937	I. S. Isakov July 1937– February 1938
	G. I. Levchenko February 1938– May 1939	V. F. Tributs from May 1939	
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	A. S. Grishin A. T. Muraviev	Ya. V. Volkov N. G. Yakovenko	A. A. Bulyshkin N. K. Smirnov
3. Chief of Staff	??  Yu. A. Panteleev	I. S. Isakov to July 1937	??
Black Sea Fleet			
1. Commander	I. K. Kozhanov  F. S. Oktiabr'sky from August 1939	P. I. Smirnov	I. S. Yumashev to August 1939
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	G. I. Gugin <sup>k</sup>  S. D. Morosov ?	I. B. Razgon from December 1936 V. A. Nikitin ?	Zemskov ?  A. T. Muraviev
3. Chief of Staff	?? I. D. Eliseev	K. I. Dushenov	??
Northern Fleet formed in May 1937 from Northern Flotilla			
1. Commander	Z. A. Zakupnev <sup>k</sup>  A. G. Golovko	K. I. Dushenov to June 1938	V. P. Drozd ? to July 1939
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	P. P. Bairachny N. M. Kulakov	D. I. Kornienko ? N. K. Smirnov	F. G. Masslaov ? A. A. Nikolaev
3. Chief of Staff	Yu. A. Panteleev	P. S. Smirnov ? since 1935	??



Table 2. (continued)

District and position	Names and dates		
	I. F. Golubev- Monatkin ?		S. G. Kuchеров
Pacific Fleet formed in 1936 from Pacific Flotilla			
1. Commander	<i>M. V. Viktorov</i> <sup>12</sup> to June 1937 <i>I. S. Yumashev</i>	G. P. Kireev	N. G. Kuznetsov to March 1939
2. Head of Political District (member of the District Military Council)	G. S. Okunev ?	S. E. Zakharov ?	??
3. Chief of Staff	O. S. Salonnikov ??	??	V. Ya. Bogdenko ?

Key: ? = fate unknown; ?? = no information; italicized name indicates that the person was purged and killed; italicized name with superscript<sup>k</sup> indicates that the person was transferred to an unestablished post, purged, and killed.

## Notes:

1. Appointed deputy chief of Main Political Directorate; purged and killed in the fall of 1937.
2. See table 1 in appendix IV.
3. Commandant of the General Staff Academy from July 1936; purged and killed in the summer of 1937.
4. Appointed chief of the Directorate of Military Educational Institutions; purged and killed in the summer of 1937.
5. See table 1 in appendix IV.
6. Purged but survived; in 1957 received rank of major general.
7. Appointed commandant of the Frunze Academy; perished in 1937.
8. Discharged from military service in 1938, returned in 1940; was killed in the hostilities in September 1941.
9. From the end of 1936 editor-in-chief of the journal *Military Thought (Voennaya Mysl)*; purged and killed in 1937.
10. Appointed deputy commander of the Detached Red Banner Far Eastern Army; perished in 1937.
11. Commander of the Eighth Army during the Finnish campaign. He was arrested in March 1940 and shot in October 1941.
12. See table 1 in appendix IV.

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## V. Naum Ettingon

Information about Naum Iakovlevich Ettingon is laughably scarce. Nonetheless, he was an amazing man. For many years until the end of the 1930s he was the principal organizer of subversive activities for the NKVD in the West.

Of Ettingon's origins we know only that "his father founded a hospital in Leipzig. A street is named after him there. At his death he left his sons 20 million marks."<sup>1</sup> There were two sons.

Mark Ettingon was a psychiatrist, a student of Sigmund Freud, and a friend of Princess Maria Bonaparte. For many years he was the generous patron of Nadezhda Plevitskaia. She said at her trial that "he dressed me from head to foot." He financed the publication of her two autobiographical books.<sup>2</sup> It is unlikely he did so only for the love of Russian music. It is more likely that he acted as messenger and finance agent for his brother Naum.

Naum Ettingon began to work for the Cheka during the Civil War. There is some evidence that he recruited Plevitskaia in the summer of 1919. The singer was then performing in Odessa, where she established close contact with the top local Soviet leadership. Together with the popular vaudeville singer Iza Kremer, she frequently participated in wild parties in the building of the military commandant's office. She bestowed her favors on assistant military commandant Shulga.

In the 1930s Naum Ettingon pulled the strings for many (possibly all) of the NKVD's foreign subversive acts, particularly the kidnappings of General Kutepov, General Miller, and Trotsky's grandson. He lived continuously abroad, where trade in Soviet furs in London served as his cover. Naum Ettingon stood at the helm of the NKVD's diversion machine and pressed its many buttons but managed to remain unnoticed. It is interesting that among the many publications on the activities of Soviet intelligence that appeared in the Russian émigré press, his name is not mentioned. His brother was not quite so lucky. At Plevitskaia's trial it was established that Mark Ettingon had been in Paris in September 1937 and had left on the twentieth, only two days before the kidnapping of General Miller. Skoblin and Plevitskaia accompanied him to the station. He left for Florence and from there to Palestine.

The last of Naum Ettingon's large and famous operations was the murder of L. Trotsky. After that he was recalled to Moscow but, unlike many of his colleagues in the NKVD, not to be killed. Ettingon was taken directly from the station to the Kremlin for an audience with Stalin, at which Beria was present. He was given the Order of Lenin due him, but that was not all. Stalin was exceptionally friendly. He embraced Ettingon and swore that as long as he, Stalin, lived, not a single hair would fall from Ettingon's head.

Ettingon was appointed deputy chief of the Main Intelligence Administration of the General Staff. He remained in that position for more than ten years and continued to

work in his specialty—he directed subversion, but now from Moscow. In the late 1940s and early 1950s his superior, General Sudoplatov, received complaints that Ettingon had reverted to old habits, was taking too much on himself, and was acting beyond the limits of his authority. It is quite possible that Ettingon was too independent and did not pick up on new trends in Soviet subversive policy. But it must be remembered that this was a time of active anti-Semitism when many Jews were removed from responsible positions.

Sudoplatov ignored the signals he was getting for as long as he could. He apparently considered Ettingon an expert at his work and trusted him implicitly. Furthermore it would not have been discreet to touch Stalin's protégé. In 1952 Ettingon's enemies reached Stalin and presented Ettingon's activities in an unfavorable light. Stalin ordered that Ettingon be removed from his position but did not say anything more about his further fate. It did not happen like that often, but it did happen.

The MGB, lacking precise instructions, did not risk leaving Ettingon at large, but neither did they dare to lock him up. They stashed him at a special dacha outside Moscow where he lived in complete comfort and strict isolation—no visitors, no papers, no radio.<sup>3</sup>

After Stalin's death Ettingon was not immediately dealt with. There was much else to do. The year 1953 was taken up with the liquidation of Beria and his henchmen, and also with the reorganization of the MVD-MGB. But then it was our hero's turn. The investigator of the Procuracy of the USSR called him in for interrogation. Ettingon tried to pretend that he was just an old, sick man with nothing important to say. When the investigator convinced him that he would not tolerate his playing the fool, Ettingon sadly commented, "Josef Vissarionovich Stalin has died."

"What does Stalin have to do with this?"

"Josef Vissarionovich once promised that while he lived not a hair would fall from my head. The way you talk to me I know that comrade Stalin is no longer among the living." Ettingon was tried and sentenced to twelve years in prison. Apparently they saw some violations of socialist legality in his activities. More likely they got him as a supporter of Beria. That was at the end of 1953 or in the very beginning of 1954.

Ettingon served his twelve years and returned to Moscow. He was met at the station with flowers and champagne by a group of former colleagues. They had prepared a pleasant surprise for him—an order for a room in Moscow.

Not long after, the engaging old man went to work for the publishing house *Mezhdunarodnaia Kniga* (International Book). The new editor knew five or six languages, but he did not write about himself in any of them.

Nothing more is known about the fate of Ettingon.

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## Notes

### Chapter 1

1. I. F. Gornostaev and Ia. M. Bugoslavsky, *Po Moskve i eia okrestnostiam. Putovoditel' — spravochnik dlia turista i moskvicha* (Moscow, 1903), p. 183.
2. Ivan Timofeevich Kokorev, *Moskva sorokovykh godov. ocherki i povesti o Moskve XIX veka* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1959), p. 73.
3. *Osoaviakhim* is a syllabic acronym for the Society of the Promotion of Defense and Aero-Chemical Development, a Soviet paramilitary organization established in 1927 to train civilians in skills useful in time of war.
4. *Vsia Moskva v karmane* (Moscow, 1926), p. 63.
5. Andrei Yanuarevich Vyshinsky played the role of chief prosecutor in the purge trials. See chapters 19 and 20.
6. Apparently they tried to observe a Russian state tradition. This is how Nicholas I dealt with the condemned Decembrists: "The sentence was carried out furatively . . . on the glacis of the fortress where there was an illusion of justice and under the cover of suddenly gathered troops. . . . Relatives were forbidden to take the bodies of the hanged men: at night they threw them into a pit, covered them with quicklime, and on the next day publicly thanked God that they had spilled their blood." See Mikhail Lunin, *Sochineniia* (New York: Khronika, 1976).

### Chapter 2

1. Tikhachevsky, *Novye voprosy voimv*. The 1936 work itself was never published, but three chapters of the 1932 edition were reprinted in *Voprosy strategii i operativnogo iskustva v sovetskikh trudakh, 1917–1940* (Moscow: Voennoe izd-vo, 1965), pp. 116–44.
2. Tikhachevsky, *Voennye plany nyneshnei Germanii* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1935).
3. Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings: Cybernetics and Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950). This was translated into Russian as *Kibernetika i obshchestvo*.
4. Tikhachevsky, "Kharakter prigranichnikh srazhenii." This is an unpublished work.
5. A. I. Todorsky in *Marshal Tikhachevsky* (Moscow: Izd-vo Politicheskoi literatury, 1963), pp. 89–90; G. Isserson, "Zapiski sovremennika o M. N. Tikhachevskom," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* 4 (1963): 64–78.
6. Hitler never did understand that he had an ally in Poland. On November 10, 1937, a year after the Kremlin war games, he announced at a meeting of the



political and military leaders of Germany. "If Czechoslovakia is destroyed and a border between Germany and Hungary is established, then we can expect that Poland would remain neutral in case we go to war with France. . . . If Germany is unsuccessful, we can expect Poland to move against Eastern Prussia, and maybe against Pomerania and Silesia as well." See "*Sovershenno sekretno! Tol'ko dlia komandovaniia!*" *Strategiia fashistskoi Germanii v voine protiv SSR. Dokumenty i materialy*, edited by N. G. Pavlenko (Moscow: Nauka, 1967), pp. 58–59.

7. Isserson, "Zapiski sovremennika," pp. 64–78.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.

## Chapter 4

1. Cited in K. E. Voroshilov, "Stalin i Krasnaia Armiia" *Pravda* December 21, 1929.
2. The authors found this citation in Soviet archives of the Red Army.
3. Voroshilov, "Stalin i Krasnaia Armiia."
4. P. N. Krasnov, *Ot dvuglavago orla k krasnomu знамени, 1894–1921* (Berlin, 1921). This was translated into English as *From the Two-Headed Eagle to the Red Flag, 1894–1921* (1923).

## Chapter 6

1. *Istoriia grazhdanskoi voiny, 1918–1921*, edited by A. S. Bubnov, S. S. Kamenev, M. N. Tukhachevsky, and R. P. Eideman (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izd-vo, 1930), vol. 3, p. 261.
2. Later I. S. Kutiakov, who commanded the 25th "Chapaev" Infantry Division on the Polish Front, together with N. M. Khlebnokov, wrote *Kievskie Kanny*, in which they explained how the 3rd Polish Army escaped encirclement and destruction. Kutiakov showed the book to People's Commissar Voroshilov in 1937. Not long thereafter he was arrested and killed. This manuscript has not been published.
3. This quote has not been verified. Lenin said something very similar at the September 1920 Party Conference. "Our Army's approach to Warsaw irrefutably proved that the center of the whole system of world imperialism, resting on the Versailles Treaty, lies somewhere near to it." *Istoriia grazhdanskoi voiny* (1930), vol. 3, p. 396.
4. Even Stalin admitted this in "K voprosu o strategii i taktike russkikh kommunistov." Despite that, until the Second World War the thesis that the proletariat of countries at war with the Soviet Union would support the Red Army remained a basic part of Soviet military doctrine. It also penetrated deeply into popular consciousness. Stalin's article is available in English as "Concerning the Question of the Strategy and Tactics of the Russian Communists," *Works* (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1954), vol. 5, pp. 163–83.
5. See his *Pokhod za Vislu* (Moscow: Voennoe izd-vo, 1923). It does not necessar-

ily follow, however, that had there not been problems in the First Horse, that Warsaw would have been taken and Poland defeated. Our description concerns only operational conditions. A higher analysis would have to consider that the whole military and, especially, economic might of the Entente stood at Poland's back. Lenin openly called the failure of the Polish campaign a political miscalculation. Concerning the purely military aspect of the campaign, he once said, "Who do you know who goes to Warsaw through Lvov . . . ?"

6. According to the authors, this is derived from a 1933 brochure, *Klim Voroshilov*, written by a certain Orlovsky.
7. Ibid.

## Chapter 7

1. Official propaganda is not concerned, understandably, with historical accuracy. In the late 1960s a memorial was erected on the site of the battle for Kakhovka, celebrated in song and poetry, a memorial in the form of a machine-gun cart, which immediately brings to mind an image of the First Horse. But at the time of that battle—July 1920—it was fighting on the Polish Front hundreds of versts from Kakhovka. The victory was won by infantry units of the Lettish 3rd, 46th, and 52nd divisions. One might suppose that the machine-gun cart belonged to Makhno's army, but the insurgent army came over to the Reds' side only in October.
2. V. V. Dushenkin, *Vtoraia Konnaia* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968).
3. Sergei Starikov and Roy Medvedev, *Philip Mironov and the Russian Civil War*, translated by Guy Daniels (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978).
4. It is usual to trace the lineage of the Cossacks from runaway peasants. L. N. Gumilev thinks, however, that on the Don before that there were settlements of surviving *Khazars*, who along with others lay the foundation stone for the Cossack tribe. After the final conquest of the Don during the reign of Peter I, runaways continued to find refuge there, but they were not taken in by the Cossacks. Thus arose the population of non-Cossacks (*inogorodnie*). Later former serfs of local serf owners joined the non-Cossacks.
5. Mikhail Sholokhov, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, translated by Stephen Garry (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941).
6. The chairman of the Donburo Syrtsov instructed after the Veshensk rebellion had begun, "For every Red Armyman and revolutionary committee member killed, shoot *one hundred* Cossacks. Prepare staging areas to send the *entire male population* from eighteen to fifty-five inclusive to forced labor in *Voronezh guberniia*, Pavlovsk, and other places. Order the convoy guards to shoot *five* for *every* [Cossack] who escapes. Require the Cossacks to watch out for one another by a system of mutual guarantee."
7. During the Civil War 48,409 former officers served in the Red Army. Altogether at the end of the war there were 130,000 commanders in the RKKA. See A. M. Iovlev and D. A. Voropaev, *Bor'ba kommunisticheskoi partii za sozдание voennykh kadrov* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1955) p. 18. The overwhelming majority of combat officers from the battalion level on up were tsarist

officers. At headquarters level it goes without saying.

8. Interestingly, when Rosenberg was in Yaroslavl in 1918, he tried to join the Russian Communist Party. He did not succeed because, as a student from a bourgeois family in the Baltic region, he did not know anyone, and he had not shown himself to be a revolutionary. What else would he do but travel to Germany and join another party?

## Chapter 8

1. General Aleksei Andreevich Arakcheev (1769–1834), a favorite of Emperor Alexander I, is remembered for his severity of manner and strict discipline.
2. Today the course and the content of the discussion seems a farce. Trotsky and his ally, Bukharin, openly demanded that the unions be turned into a weapon for the repression of the working class, leaving workers no means with which to defend themselves from the state, which was to become the master of all factories and plants. Lenin and Zinoviev agreed in principle with this approach (in a resolution offered by Lenin and accepted by the Central Committee the formula “healthy forms of the militarization of labor” was approved), but they insisted on more careful public phraseology (“trade unions are schools of Communism”). The “workers’ opposition” decried the unbearably hard conditions of the proletariat and the massive exodus of workers from the Party, and demanded the transfer of all authority in industry to trade union functionaries in the All-Russian Congress of Producers. Among the leaders of the “workers’ opposition” the tone was set by former proletarians Shliapnikov, Kutuzov, and Medvedev, together with a daughter of a tsarist general, Aleksandra Kollontai. In the heat of their polemics they insisted on the domination of the intelligentsia in the Party. At times they spoke even more candidly and said Jews. Not surprisingly, the groups headed by Lenin and Trotsky were able to find a common language and put up a common front. Shliapnikov’s group earned the epithets “Marxist apostates” and “anarcho-sindicalists.” They were routed at the Tenth Congress. All that is left of their venture are the sham workers’ councils in Yugoslavia.
3. All of these startling documents are published. See *Direktivy komandovaniia frontov Krasnoi Armii, 1917–1922* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), vol. 3, 508–9. The order referred to in the radio appeal for surrender has not been published. Did it ever exist?
4. See V. V. Maiakovsky, *Sochineniia v trekh tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1965), vol. 3, 332–33. That section of the poem begins, “The quiet Jew, Pavel Ilich Lavut, told me.” *Ibid.*, p. 327.
5. Frunze reported to Lenin and the Central Committee that the Red losses in storming the isthmus were “not less than 10,000 killed.”
6. This is the same chivalrous Bela Kun who was named chairman of the Crimean Revolutionary Committee.
7. An outside observer could immediately see that all was not right with the workers’ and peasants’ power. E. Colombino, a member of an Italian Communist delegation that visited Russia in the summer of 1920, wrote in his book *Three Months in Soviet Russia*, “Many times we were told, repeatedly told, that the

basic principle of the Russian revolution was the dictatorship of the proletariat. But in this case we are dealing, at least a little, with exaggeration. A dictatorship exists, one possibly in the interests of the proletariat, but the proletariat itself, poor thing, has little to say about it. . . . The dictatorship is run by the Communist Party, or more accurately, by a fraction of it. . . . It is undoubtedly a dictatorship of a few. This socialist tsarism is easy to understand, if not to justify, in a country which has behind it centuries of slavery and tsarist dictatorship." *Desiatyi sezd RKP(b). Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1933), pp. 884–85.

8. Aleksandr Nikolaevich Slepko, *Kronshtadtskii miatezh* (Moscow, 1928).
9. S. Uritsky, "Krasnyi Kronshtadt vo vlasti vragov revoliutsii," in *Gradzhdanskaia Voina, 1918–1921*, edited by A. S. Bubov, S. S. Kamenev, and R. P. Eideman (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1928), vol. 1, pp. 358–74.
10. S. Semanov *Likvidatsiia antisovetskogo kronshtadtskogo miatezha 1921 goda* (Moscow Nauka, 1973), p. 185. It would be nice to know the names of the men Semanov claims to have interviewed. The emphases in the quotation are ours.
11. *Antonovshchina. Sbornik Tambovskogo gubkoma RKP*, edited by S. Evgenov and O. Litovsky (Tambov, 1923), p. 14.
12. Vladimir Dokukin, *Pravda o banditakh* (Tambov: Gosizdat, 1921). Emphasis in the original.
13. Ibid. Our emphasis this time.
14. *Antonovshchina*, p. 12.
15. The troops sent against the rebels were not to be laughed at. While the main force of the rebels did not even have a rifle for every man, they had to face the heavily armed shock group of Uborevich: the 14th Cavalry Brigade, with a thousand cavalry troops and two heavy guns, Kotovsky's cavalry brigade, and three armored detachments.

## Chapter 9

1. From time to time lower-ranking activists would violate that rule. For example, the "workers' opposition" tried to continue their struggle after the Tenth Party Congress, where they had suffered a crushing defeat. Lenin almost expelled Shliapnikov from the Central Committee for that.
2. We will explain Trotsky's dismissal in detail in the next chapter. Zinoviev was at this time chairman and undisputed leader of the Leningrad Provincial Committee.
3. Concluding words of the Fourteenth Congress. *XIV S'ezd Vsesoiuznoi kommunisticheskoi Partii (b) 18–31 dekabria 1925 g. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1926), p. 502.
4. The *oprichnina* was a bloody "reform" carried out by Ivan IV (the Terrible) between 1565 and 1572 to weaken the nobility and enhance his own power as autocrat. Approximately four thousand people perished in the *oprichnina*, and many more were dispossessed and displaced.
5. *Glavkontsesskom*: the Main Committee on Concessions. A concession was permission for a foreign firm to operate a factory or business in the Soviet Union. For example, Armand Hammer held several concessions in the 1920s, including a pencil factory in Moscow.



6. This point permitted the Central Committee to apply the extreme measure of expulsion from the Party for violations of discipline or factionalism. The punishment could be extended even to members of the TSK. In that case a plenum of the TSK including all candidate members of the TSK and members of the Control Commission would be convened. Expulsion required a two-thirds vote. Earlier such a measure had been the prerogative of a Party Congress. The draft of the resolution, which was written by Lenin, upset many of the delegates who were slow to be persuaded. Lenin assured them that the provision would never be used and was introduced only as a warning ("aim the machine guns"). The confusion was so great that a roll call vote was required. Only 59 percent of the delegates voted for the resolution. It was decided not to make point 7 public. Only a year later it was used against TSK member A. Shliapnikov, but the vote for expulsion fell three short. (It was Lenin, of course, who asked for his expulsion.) Stalin did not participate in the vote at the Tenth Congress as he had only a deliberative vote, but nonetheless he made good use of this Leninist instrument. It was he, by the way, who first divulged the point during a polemic with the Trotskyites at the Thirteenth Conference in 1923.
7. The majority of those expelled returned to the Party, but several of them, Zinoviev and Kamenev, for example, were expelled repeatedly. These people were excluded from political life and thoroughly demoralized. None of them were fated to survive the Great Purge.
8. Stalin, Molotov, and Voroshilov favored pressing the case. Rykov, Tomsky, and Bukharin were against it. The matter was decided by the votes of Kalinin, Rudzutak, and Kuibyshev, who after brief vacillation joined the Stalinists.
9. Nabokov wrote in the Kadet paper *Rul* on November 18, 1921, "The Communist Party came to power as a small group of highly principled, energetic activists, who had a small number of disciplined workers among the peasants and workers. Then the Party gradually, but relatively slowly, grew while the struggle on several fronts helped maintain iron discipline in the ranks of the Party. Recently a huge number of petit bourgeoisie—clerks, office workers, shop assistants, and others—have flooded the Party. The former muscular organism of the Party that could withstand the hardest blows began to weaken, to get fat. . . . The flow of principled people into the Party ceased. For the most part people seeking various ways to make their lives easier rushed to join. . . . Tests included in examinations on the program of the Communist Party had very negative results. In the great majority of cases, even in the cities, it was impossible to get satisfactory answers. . . ."
10. Arkady Belinkov, "Poet i tolstiak," *Baikal* (1968), nos. 1–2.
11. Malinin and Burin were authors of a widely used arithmetic text in prerevolutionary Russia.
12. Voroshilov, "Stalin i Krasnaia Armiia," *Pravda*, December 21, 1929.

## Chapter 10

1. Vladimir Ilich Lenin, "K derevenskoi bednote," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5th ed. (Moscow, 1969), vol. 7, p. 170.

2. Lenin, "Voisko i revoliutsii," *PSS*, vol. 12, pp. 113–14.
3. Lenin, "Itogi diskusii o samoopredelenii," *PSS*, vol. 30, pp. 17–58.
4. Lenin, "Dvenadtsat' kratkikh tezisev o zashchite Greilikhom zashchity otechstva," *PSS*, vol. 30, p. 331.
5. These are Marx's words from *The Civil War in France*, quoted by Lenin in "Gosudarstvo i revoliutsii," *PSS*, vol. 33, p. 41.
6. On Dmitri Miliutin's military reforms, see Forrest A. Miller, *Dmitrii Miliutin and the Reform Era in Russia* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968).
7. See chapter 8, note 1, on Arakcheev. On his work with the military colonies, see Alan Ferguson, "The Russian Military Settlements, 1816–1866" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1954).
8. I. Berkhin, *Voennaia reforma v SSSR, 1924–1925 gg.* (Moscow: Voennoe izd-vo, 1958).
9. Lenin, "Rech' v den' krasnogo ofitsera," *PSS*, vol. 37, p. 200.
10. When his opponents allied as the "military opposition" at the Eighth Congress, Trotsky demonstratively departed for the Eastern Front, leaving Lenin to restore order in the Party. Decisively, but not without difficulty, Lenin put down the little mutiny, and the military specialists remained at their posts.
11. Skliansky did not have long to live. A doctor by profession, he was appointed director of the Moscow textile trust (*Mossukno*). In the summer of 1925 he drowned at a foreign resort.
12. These important changes were made not only without Trotsky, but also without the new Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars Rykov, who was also away until April.
13. *Trinadtsati s'ezd RKP(b), Mai 1924 goda. Stenograficheskie otcheti* (Moscow, 1963), p. 240.
14. This was discussed in the previous chapter.
15. See *Pravda*, November 11, 1925.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*
18. Boris Pilnyak, *Povest' nepogashennoi lyny* (Sofia, 1927). The story was to have appeared in the journal *Novy Mir*, but at the last minute that whole issue was confiscated. The editorial board admitted that same year, 1926, that it had been a political mistake to accept the story for publication. It was published in Sofia in 1927, but it is still not available to Soviet readers.
19. *Pravda*, November 5, 1925. Our emphasis.
20. This is from Stalin's speech at Dzerzhinsky's funeral on July 22, 1926. It can be found as "F. Dzerzhinskii (In Memory of F. Dzerzhinskii)," *Works* (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1954), vol. 8, pp. 203–4.
21. I. A. Teliatnikov quotes Tukhachevsky in his published memoirs and adds that these words later hurt Tukhachevsky's relations with Voroshilov. In Teliatnikov's article, "Vnikaia vo vse," in *Marshal Tukhachevskii: vospominaniia друзей i soratnikov* (Moscow: Voennoe izd-vo, 1965), pp. 162–75, he says Tukhachevsky was friendly with Frunze and Ordzhonikidze and that Frunze and Tukhachevsky criticized Trotsky at the Eleventh Party Congress in March 1922.
22. That same year, 1925, Stalin removed his potential rival Kvirin from the Party

- apparatus and transferred him to economic work in VSNKh. Later, and until his death in 1937, he worked in Gosplan. In the Ukraine the inveterate Stalinist Kaganovich replaced Kvirin.
23. Malicious tongues, for the time being speaking the truth, relate the following episode about Voroshilov's selection. Rukhimovich announced, "We all know Klim well. He's a brave fellow, but why give him the Army to command. A company would be more than enough!" This was Moisei Lvovich Rukhimovich, a Bolshevik since 1913, who served in the Red Army in the Ukraine during the Civil War. He was arrested in 1938 during the purges and died in prison.
  24. This citation was taken from an unpublished review of L. Nikulin, *Marshal Tukhachevsky*, by A. I. Todorsky. The authors possess a copy of the review. See also Todorsky, *Marshal Tukhachevsky* (Moscow: Izd-vo politicheskoi literatury, 1963).
  25. RVS order #698, November 13, 1925. This document is not published.
  26. Of the military men, only the Zinovievite M. Lashevich, the new deputy chairman of the RVS USSR, fought on the side of the "Leningrad opposition" at the Congress. For that he was exiled to the Chinese Eastern Railroad where he died or killed himself in 1928.

## Chapter II

1. See M. V. Frunze, "Edinaia voennaia doktrina i Krasnaia Armia," in *Voprosy strategii i operativnogo iskusstva v sovetskikh trudakh, 1917-1940* (Moscow: Voennoe izd-vo, 1965), pp. 29-40.
2. L. D. Trotsky, "Voennaia doktrina ili mnimo-voennoe doktrinerstvo," translated as, "Military Doctrine or Pseudo-Military Doctrinairism," in *Military Writings* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1969), pp. 31-69.
3. During a discussion at the editorial offices of *Voenno-istoricheskii Zhurnal* (*Military History Journal*) several historians—M. Angarsky, S. Naida, A. Kadi-shev, A. Golubev, and others—called for an end to the mythological representation of the campaign of fourteen nations. See *VIZh* (1966), no. 2. The righteous patriotic anger of the leadership knew no bounds; all of the editors of the journal, including the editor-in-chief, were sacked. See N. Pavlenko, "Nekotorye voprosy razvitiia teorii strategii v 20kh godakh," *VIZh* (1966), no. 5: 10-26.
4. See *Grazhdanskaia voina, 1918-1921* (Moscow, 1930), vol. 3, pp. 130-31; also *Malaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia* (Moscow, 1930), vol. 3, p. 480.
5. The lone exception is the article by A. V. Golubev in *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*. See Golubev, "Obrashchena li byla v proshloe nasha voennaia teoriia v 20-e gody?" *VIZh* (1965), no. 10: 35-47.
6. Chapaev, by the way, possessed an extraordinarily fine mind. He was made a caricature by filmmakers who must have read Furmanov's book with one bad eye. On the orders of their socialist keepers they created a fantastic image, half a Red St. George the dragon slayer, half a jester. Chapaev was a talented and brave commander and had none of those foolish quirks ascribed to him by the pseudo-brothers Vasiliev. But it cannot be denied that he was poorly educated. It is enough to present Chapaev's request to leave the Academy as he wrote it:

Much-respected comrade Lindov [a member of the 4th Army Revolutionary Military Council]

I request You most humbly to recall me to the headquarters of the 4th Army in any position commander or commissar in any regiment as I the education of the Academy is not doing me any good what they are teaching I have already gone through in pragmatic you know that I need my general education qualification which I am not receiving here and am bored for no reason in these walls I disagree this seems a prison and ask humbly that you do not exhaust me in this confinement I want to work and not lie about and if you do not recall me I will go to the doctor which will free me and I will lie around uselessly but I want to work and help you if you want me to help you I will with pleasure be at your service be so kind to get me out of these stone walls.

Respectively yours Chapaev

Lindov's response was "Tell Chapaev that we do not have the right to recall him from the Academy as he was sent there on the orders of comrade Trotsky."

The authors found this in A. Todorsky's review of L. Nikulin, *Marshal Tukhachevsky*, cited above.

7. We list only a few editions: *V vostochnom otriade* (Warsaw, 1908); *Vozdukhoplavanie v Germanii* (St. Petersburg, 1910); *Voina v gorakh* (St. Petersburg, 1906–7); *Strategiia* (Moscow: Gosvoenizd-vo, 1926), 2nd ed. (Moscow: Voennyi vestnik, 1927); *Istoriia voennogo iskusstva* (Moscow, 1922–23), 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1925); *Strategiia v trudakh voennykh klassikov* (Moscow, 1924–26); *Evoliutsiia voennogo iskusstva* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1927–28); *Iskusstvo vozhdeniia polka* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1930); *Klauzevits* (Moscow, 1935); *Russko-Iaponskaia Voina, 1904–1905* (Oranienbaum: Ofiterskaia stroevaia shkola, 1910).
8. *Strategiia*, which is difficult to find in this country, has been excerpted in *Voprosy strategii i operativnogo iskusstva*. See note 1 above.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 243.
11. General Zhilin has written several books on military history and particularly on World War II. See, e.g., *Problemy voennoi istorii* (Moscow: Voennizdat, 1975); *Vazhneishie operatsii Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny, 1941–1945; sbornik statei* (Moscow: Voennoe izd-vo, 1956); *Kak fashistskaia Germaniia gotovila napadenie na Sovetskii Soiuz* (Moscow: Mysl, 1965). This last title has been translated as *They Sealed Their Own Doom*, translated by David Fidlon (Moscow: Progress, 1970).
12. From *Strategiia*, in *Voprosy strategii i operativnogo iskusstva*, p. 245.
13. Frunze's writing is included in *Sobranie sochinenii*, edited by A. S. Bubnov (Moscow: Gosizd-vo, 1926), and in *Voprosy strategii i operativnogo iskusstva*. For this quote, see "Edinaia voennaia doktrina i Krasnaia Armia," in *Voprosy*, p. 33.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 36.



16. M. V. Frunze, "O kharaktere operatsii grazhdanskoi voyny v SSSR i budushchikh operatsii Sovetskoi armii," in *Voprosy*.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
18. "Front i tyl v voine budushchego," in *Voprosy*, p. 63.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
21. *Ibid.*
22. M. N. Tukhachevsky, "Strategiia natsionalnaia i klassovaia," in *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, compiled by G. I. Oskin and P. P. Chernushkov (Moscow: Voennoe izd-vo, 1964), pp. 31–50. See esp. p. 32.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
25. See *Voprosy vysshego komandovaniia* (Moscow: Gosvoenizdat, 1924); *Voprosy sovremennoi strategii* (Moscow: Voennyi Vestnik, 1926); *Taktika i strategii*, in *Sbornik Voennoi akademii im. M. V. Frunze 1* (Moscow, 1926); *Kommentarii k polevomu ustavu 1929 g.*, excerpted in *Voprosy*.
26. See *Voprosy sovremennoi strategii*, in *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, pp. 244–61.
27. *Ibid.*

## Chapter 12

1. K. E. Voroshilov, "Stalin i Krasnaia Armia," *Pravda*, December 21, 1929.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.* This is in a telegram, #00079, from Sverdlov.
4. Voroshilov, "Stalin i Krasnaia Armia."
5. See chapter 6 of this book on the First Horse Army.
6. Voroshilov, "Stalin i Krasnaia Armia."
7. In February 1920 Stalin persuaded Budenny and Voroshilov to subordinate themselves to a new commander and called Tukhachevsky "the demon of the Civil War."
8. *Istoriia Grazhdanskoi Voyny, 1918–1921* (1930), p. 271.
9. A. I. Egorov, *Razgrom Denikina, 1919* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe voennoe izd-vo, 1931), pp. 3–4.

## Chapter 13

1. See Lenin's note to People's Commissar of Justice Kursky on terror, 1921. This and similar documents emphasizing Lenin's role in creating the Cheka and approving and urging the use of terror may be found in Lennard Gerson, *The Secret Police in Lenin's Russia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), and George Leggett, *The Cheka: Lenin's Political Police* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).
2. *Trianadsatyi s'ezd RKP(b). Mai 1924 goda. Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1963), p. 711.
3. It may be that three hundred years is as long as any significant phenomenon can

last in Russia. Like the Mongol Yoke, like serfdom, the Romanovs outlasted their stay and were chased from the scene.

4. Apparently as every actress has her admirers, every tyrant, however cruel, after his death leaves sighing admirers. Compared to Stalin, Nero was a child, a sissy, but in his time he managed to annoy a fair number of Romans. Seutonius describes the mood of society after the princeps' suicide: "His death caused such rejoicing in society, that people ran all through the city with felt hats on their heads as a symbol of liberation from slavery. Nonetheless there were many others who long after [his death] in spring and summer decorated his grave with flowers; they put images of him on rostra in a wide-bordered toga and with his edicts, just as if he were alive, just as if they expected his imminent return." After that we ought not be surprised that there is a demand for homemade souvenirs with likenesses of Stalin. And not only in Georgia.
5. Nationalization was not the realization of the goals of the proletarian revolution. The Bolshevik program called for workers' control of industry. Nationalization, as Lenin explained, was revenge against the bourgeoisie for their unwillingness to cooperate with the new regime. Of course, for the owners of the nationalized enterprises that distinction was unimportant.
6. Every household was left a small private plot of about 0.20–0.25 hectares. Individuals who remained outside the collective systems received less land than members of kolkhozes. Only in a few regions with particularly favorable conditions, such as Transcaucasia and Central Asia, was this enough land to feed a family.
7. *The Collected Works of Sir Winston Churchill*, vol. 25, *The Second World War*, vol. 4, *The Hinge of Fate* (London: Library of Imperial History, 1975), p. 322.
8. The culture has proved amazingly hardy and has now infected many countries. The carriers have many names. Some see them as freedom fighters, others as terrorists, even as common criminals and murderers.
9. The comparison of Trotsky to Stavrogin made by Aleksei Tolstoy during the Great Purge was a strained interpretation that was meant to be useful, not accurate. It counted on the public's ignorance. That comparison was made in *Izvestiia*. See chapter 22.
10. It is hard to restrain from offering a long quote: "He had everything right on paper . . . it was espionage. Every member of the society watched one another and was obliged to report. Each belonged to all, and all to every. All were slaves and in their slavery equal. In extreme cases calumny and murder, but the main thing was equality. The first thing was to lower the level of education, science, and talents. A high level of science and talents was attainable by only higher abilities . . . higher abilities were not needed! . . . Slaves must be equal: without despotism there never would have been freedom or equality, but in the herd there must be equality. That is Shigalev's theory." F. M. Dostoevsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Leningrad, 1974), vol. 10, p. 322. This translation is mine, as are those that follow.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 311.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 312.
13. See N. Korzhavin, *Vremena* (Frankfurt: Posev, 1976).

14. A psychiatrist would not find it hard to qualify such escapades as megalomania and exhibitionism. However, as the sad example of Professor Bekhterev shows, it is dangerous to apply professional diagnoses in times of social unrest. More recently the relations between psychiatry and real life have taken a new direction.
15. Dostoevsky, *Polnoe sobranie*, vol. 10, p. 323.

## Chapter 14

1. This is from A. I. Todorsky's review of L. Nikulin, *Marshal Tukhachevsky*. See chapter 10, note 24.
2. *Protiv reaktsionnykh teorii na voennonauchnom fronte. Kritika strategicheskikh i voennoistoricheskikh vzgliadov prof. Svechina* (Leningrad, 1931).
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. These are the words Svechin uses to describe the economic policy of wartime: "We will have to temporarily repeal the eight-hour work day and suspend the operation of the Code of Laws on labor. We will have to increase the intensity of labor and the length of the working day, to reduce real wages. Announcing these demands to the people, dooming them to labor as in penal servitude, depriving them of tolerable conditions of existence will go parallel with the struggle [fought] for these very people. . . . To fight means more than making a demonstration." Unheard of! There was nothing like it in the Fatherland War.

## Chapter 15

1. *XVI S'ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (b). Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Moskovii rabochii, 1934), pp. 282–89.
2. Ibid., pp. 476–89.
3. Ibid., pp. 506–8.
4. Ibid., pp. 632–34. The old cavalryman complained bitterly that he was being made fun of in the press because of his passion for horse breeding—both in words and in caricatures. Budenny was very popular, but the public still enjoyed the ridicule. The stenographic record notes eleven interruptions of laughter, one of general laughter, and another of Homeric laughter, but Budenny stood his ground. Without horse power the national economy would founder. The same was even truer of the Army: "I am not just saying that the horse is enormously important in the country's defense. The defense of the country without horses is unthinkable." Unfortunately, Budenny was not the only one who thought that way.
5. Vladimir Kiriakovich Triandafillov, *Kharakter operatsii sovremennykh armii*, in *Voprosy strategii i operativnogo iskusstva*, pp. 291–345.
6. Ibid. Triandafillov wrote: "at the present time, thinking abstractly, it is easier to establish a stable front on defense than it used to be. The problem with defense is that it is purposely conducted by a small force and cannot always provide a sufficiently strong front for battle formations." Because of this excessive dogmatism, this assertion has proved wrong. One can point to Stalingrad and the Kursk

arc where the exceptional stubbornness of the defense created the conditions for enormously important operational success.

7. Lieutenant-General Dzenit recalls that in 1930 in order to demonstrate to Stalin and members of the Politburo the increasing importance of armored troops "large maneuvers were conducted outside Moscow with the participation of the only mechanized brigade and motorized detachment, which were attached to the Moscow proletarian division. . . . It became impossible to continue to ignore Tukhachevsky's suggestions. A decision was soon made to allocate significant funds for tanks." Stalin probably saw tanks for the first time, and they took his fancy. The quotation above comes from Dzenit, "S vyshki," in *Marshal Tukhachevskii: vospominaiia družei i soratnikov* (Moscow: Voennoe izd-vo, 1965), pp. 130–34.
8. A rather complete presentation of the state of Soviet military thought of the 1920s and 1930s is given by two recently published anthologies: *Voprosy strategii i operativnogo iskusstva*; and *Voprosy taktiki v sovetskikh voennykh trudakh, 1917–1940* (Moscow, 1970).
9. G. S. Isserson, "Istoricheskie korni novykh form boia" *Voennaia Mysl* (1937), no. 1: 4.
10. Isserson, "Evoliutsiia operativnogo iskusstva," in *Voprosy strategii i operativnogo iskusstva*, pp. 398–99.
11. Ibid.
12. B. H. Liddell Hart, *The Strategy of Indirect Approach* (London: Faber and Faber, 1941). The quote can be found in a more recent edition, *Strategy* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1954), p. 328. This work was translated into Russian as *Strategiia nepriamykh deistvii* (Moscow, 1957). Liddell Hart, who advanced the theory of indirect actions, began his scholarly career at the same time as Svechin. His first work, *Paris, or Future War*, was published in 1925, two years after Svechin's *Strategiia*. The English author is like his Russian colleague in many of his fundamental ideas, although he was not acquainted with Svechin's work.
13. G. Isserson, "Razvitie teorii sovetskogo operativnogo iskusstva v 30-e gody," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal* (1965), no. 1: 36–46.
14. See chapter 2 of this book.
15. Liddell Hart, *Strategy of Indirect Approach*, p. 121.

## Chapter 16

1. It would have been better to express these in tons, but in centners they look ten times as impressive.
2. This number is figured on the basis of relative indices from the report at the previous Congress. It would seem that these indices are overstated by 5 percent. If we accept them for the following years, then the proper figure for 1929 would be 754 million centners.
3. We are assuming the given tempo of growth of marketability, 15 percent per year, continued. It was painfully tempting in 1932 or 1933 to reach the level of 1913.
4. Based on the growth of marketability we have assumed.



5. At that time the kolkhozes owned 74 percent of land under grain. *Sovkhozes*, or state farms, had another 11 percent. That left the individual farmers, who were 34 percent of the peasant population, only 15 percent of the land.
6. At the very least Stalin bragged that the marketability of kolkhoz produce, unlike that of the muzhiks', reached 30 to 40 percent. If the collections were at the upper limit, life must have been very hard for the comrade kolkhozniks. The marketability of grain is now approximately 40 percent, but the gross yield is 2.5 times greater, and the rural population has decreased by 50 percent.
7. This is assuming a ratio of harvested grain to seed of 5:1. Generally in these years the area of sown land increased 15 to 20 percent.
8. It is possible (oh, so possible!) that these figures on the gross yield are *inflated*. Later, in the 1950s, Khrushchev revealed a little secret about how the grain problem was solved. Instead of weighing the grain put in granaries, the productivity of selected fields (naturally, rather good fields) was determined, and this figure was multiplied by the area of sown land. Thanks to this rather simple device, grain that was lost during harvesting or transportation, or never produced on poorer land, could be considered *collected*. If Stalin had discovered this un-Euclidian math in the early 1930s, then the peasants' nutrition must have been even worse.
9. If the statistics bore you, please read *Kotlovan* by the magnificent and honest master Andrei Platonov. People in the starving villages feeling the approach of death would lie down in coffins they had prepared beforehand—to make it easier to bury them. Platonov, *The Foundation Pit*. *Kotlovan*, translated by Thomas A. Whitney (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973). This is a bilingual text.
10. Grain was the major source of foreign currency, but not the only source; lumber, furs, bristles, and leather were sent abroad. But all that was not enough, and a real search was begun in the country for currency and gold. The OGPU carried out mass seizures of valuables from the population in 1929–30. During the first Five-Year Plan the hotels and restaurants of Moscow and Leningrad served only foreigners. A huge number of paintings and other valuable artworks from the Hermitage collection and also details of decorations from the ruins of the Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow were sold abroad in those years.
11. There were also a small number of *Komsomoltsy*, who later got the credit for building *everything*.
12. There is information that in 1928–29 forty-eight people from the Gosplan staff were shot.
13. *XVI S'ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (b)*. *Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1934), pp. 482–83.
14. *XVII S'ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (b)*. 26 ianvaria–10 fevralia 1934 g. *Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1934), p. 176.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 263–66.
16. *XVI S'ezd*, p. 487.
17. *XVII S'ezd*, p. 356.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 178. Also, according to Ordzhonikidze, 21.5 billion rubles were spent in heavy industry, while the basic fund grew to 13.6 billion. Apparently he included circulating capital in the final sum.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 455–64. Piatakov also spoke at the Congress. He had been expelled in 1927 and readmitted in 1929, but he had apparently been long forgiven because his speech was exclusively devoted to questions of heavy industry. He was Ordzhonikidze's first deputy. "Prolonged applause" greeted Piatakov's speech.
20. The Scientific-Technical Administration is in Russian *Nauchno-Tekhnicheskoe upravlenie*. The Main Concessions Committee, *Glavkontsesskom*. *Tsentrosoiuz* was an administrative umbrella organ meant to organize numerous small shops and industries.
21. *XVII S''ezd*, pp. 124–29. The emphasis in this quotation and below is Bukharin's.
22. Dobchinsky and Bobchinsky are characters, famous for lacking any personal opinions, in Gogol's play "Revizor" ("The Inspector General").
23. *XVII S''ezd*, pp. 492–97.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 516–22.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 209–12.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 251–57. Kirov's speech was entitled "Samyi iarkii dokument epokhi."
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 236–39.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 245–49.
29. That means he must have joined the Party in 1892. The founding of the RSDRP, from which most Bolsheviks count the years, occurred in 1898. Some, including Lenin, began to count from their service in the St. Petersburg "Union of Struggle," which was founded in 1895. It is unclear what this old warrior was counting from.
30. See *ibid.*, p. 641. It is only grain that we still have less of than, say, farmers in the United States. Those who doubt this mystifying information can turn to the stenographic reports published in 1934.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 464–65.
32. Everyone who needed to know that Stalin was hostile to Tukhachevsky and all of his proposals. Once when it was necessary to have the Politburo approve an increase in Army manpower, Tukhachevsky and his friend Triandafillov resorted to military cunning. Tukhachevsky cited incorrect figures in his report, not those he desired. Triandafillov objected and introduced the correct figures. Stalin was glad of a chance to spite Tukhachevsky and sided with Triandafillov. The proposal was accepted as Stalin and Triandafillov's.

## Chapter 17

1. *XVI S''ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (b)*. *Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Moskovii rabochii, 1934), p. 36. Stalin's emphasis.
2. That same Sergei Ivanovich Syrtsov, who as chairman of the Donburo was notorious for his untiring cruelty in persecuting the Cossacks. See chapter 7 of this book.
3. On August 11, 1936, the TSIK introduced several amendments to the law of December 1: (a) open court sessions, (b) admission of lawyers, (c) seventy-two hours given in which to ask for pardon. The amelioration was timed to precede the infamous trial of 1936 to give hope to the defendants who had been promised

- their lives in exchange for certain testimony. In fact, nothing changed. In 1937 the law, which was so easy to manipulate, was toughened again.
4. In the 1920s statements about such things were very unclear. Later they became quite definite. The facts about medical murders are now openly admitted, and the murderers were selected from a suitable circle of people. The deaths of Gorky, Menzhinsky, and Kuibyshev were blamed on their personal secretaries and doctors Levin, Pletnev, and Kazakov. A group of Jewish doctors in the Kremlin were accused of the deaths of Sherbakov and Zhdanov. Stalin's personal physician, Vinogradov, was included in the group to make the case more convincing. He played his part well. In 1938 he signed several falsified documents about their ill-intentioned healing, which sufficed as death sentences for his colleagues.
  5. His sister who was at home was apparently the source of this version of the story.
  6. That is one of the versions. According to the other, Zinoviev and Kameney demanded to talk to the Politburo. They were supposedly taken to the Kremlin where they talked with Stalin, Voroshilov, and Ezhov who comprised a special commission of the Politburo. The versions agree that they were promised their lives and the security for their families if they accepted the prosecution's line at the trial.
  7. Tomsy shot himself on August 22, 1936, when he received the newspaper account of the trial. Stalin played cat and mouse with Rykov and Bukharin a while longer. A short announcement appeared in the papers on September 10 that investigation in their case had been halted "for absence of any evidence of their criminal activity." In the January trial Radek again pointed a finger at the rightists as conspirators.
  8. In the trial of August 1936 there was a whole squad of provocateurs: V. Olberg, F. David, Berman-Iurin, M. Lurie, N. Lurie. There seems to have been only one in the January 1937 trial—Shestov.
  9. Again there is a parallel version. It dates this episode to the January trial and associates it with Piatakov. Sergo highly valued his assistant in the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry and might have dealt with Stalin for his life. It is known that he did visit Piatakov in prison. The nearness of the dates also supports this version: Piatakov was executed at the end of January, Sergo's murder occurred in mid-February.
  10. They telegraphed Molotov, Kaganovich, and other members of the Politburo from Sochi on September 25, 1936: "We consider it absolutely necessary and urgent that comrade Ezhov be appointed to the post of People's Commissar of Internal Affairs. Yagoda showed himself to be clearly incapable of uncovering the Trotskyite-Zinovievite bloc. The OGPU is four years behind in this matter." The figure had not been chosen at random. It referred to 1932, to Riutin's case. For the time being, until he was eliminated, Yagoda was appointed People's Commissar of Communications, because of which its former chairman Rykov was removed from the Council of People's Commissars.

## Chapter 18

1. See Joseph Stalin, "Address to the Graduates of the Red Army Academies," in *Selected Writings* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1970), pp. 361–65.

The quotes that follow are also from this source.

2. Nothing in history disappears without a trace. The Kremlin command sent the Academy a bill for the broken gate. It has been preserved.
3. Higher military commanders okayed the arrest of their subordinates. Substantial lists signed by Gamarnik, Primakov, Blucher, Uborevich, and many others have been preserved. There are none signed by Yakir or Tukhachevsky.
4. Anastasia Ruban, a worker with the NKVD, told Yakir that the accusation against Sablin, which she had seen, was entirely fabricated. Three days later she shot herself; officially she died of a heart attack.
5. The trial's scriptwriters, particularly Vyshinsky, were uninventive and humorless. The monstrous acts of their drama looked like the escapades of second-rate swindlers. For example, Chairman Zelensky of Tsentrosoiuz gave this testimony at the 1938 trial: "When a person comes to buy things in a store he is overcharged, given false weight or false measure, that is, they name a price higher than the real price of the goods, or give him less than they should or give something of a lesser quality." These are merely the basic principles of our trade; it is shameful to pretend it is unusual wrecking. Zelensky continued: "To illustrate the extent of this wrecking I will say that of 135,000 shops checked by the inspectorate of the trade-cooperative network, incidents of mismeasure and deceit of customers were found in 13,000. Another important form of wrecking, also meant to *cause discontent in the population*, is the freezing of goods, achieved by the incorrect or delayed shipping of goods. For example, there have been cases when *summer goods* were shipped *in the winter*, and vice versa, *winter goods* have arrived in the stores in the *summer*.

VYSHINSKY. That is to say the population has been offered winter boots in the summer, and slippers in the winter?

ZELENSKY. Yes.

V. This was done intentionally, according to your testimony?

Z. Yes.

V. For reasons of provocation?

Z. Yes.

[The emphasis above is ours.]

We hasten to calm the departed souls of comrades Zelensky (posthumously rehabilitated) and Vyshinsky (never prosecuted). Wrecking like that in retail trade, "with the aim of causing dissatisfaction in the population," goes on to this day with undiminished success. The public was fed similar flannel at all the open trials. It is not impossible that the accused prompted the prosecution with the funnier examples in the secret hope they could demonstrate to the people the absurdity of the accusations.

6. The following example demonstrates that Radek was an informer. Blumkin, the left SR who killed German ambassador Mirbach in 1918, was an NKVD worker. Because of his outstanding capabilities. Dzerzhinsky decided to save him. He was taken out of the public's eye and used for special assignments. For example, he was put in a cell with Savinkov, where he became so accustomed to the ways of the illustrious warrior that he was able to compose a document that was passed



off as Savinkov's last letter when his murder was announced as suicide. Even Savinkov's son thought the letter authentic. In 1930 or 1931 Blumkin was abroad on a secret mission and on his own initiative went to see Trotsky on the Prince Islands (Kizil Adalar). Trotsky asked him to carry a letter to Radek. Blumkin carried out his request, but Radek went straight to the OGPU with it. That time Blumkin was not spared.

7. The Red Montesquieu, comrade Vyshinsky, said that for sentence to be passed, *probability* of a guilty verdict was sufficient.
8. *Detstvo v tiur'me; memuary Petra Iakira*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 15–17. In English as *A Childhood in Prison* (London: Macmillan, 1972).
9. This comes from *Komandarm Iakir: vospominaniia družei i soratnikov* (Moscow, 1963).

## Chapter 19

1. He had just been appointed chief of the Administration of Cadres of the RKKA on May 23. In the fall of 1937 he was arrested and perished.
2. This version seems neater, which does not, however, increase its authenticity. Gamarnik apparently killed himself after he learned from Bulin that he had been removed from his post as chief of the Political Administration of the RKKA, and that Yakir had been arrested.
3. A. Dunaevsky, *Po sledam Gaia* (Erevan, 1966), pp. 188, 232–33.
4. A. Dunaevsky tells very little about Gai's escape and provides no dates. If the story of his meeting with Putna is true, then that episode took place no earlier than September 1936, that is, a year after his arrest in Minsk. Gai was sent to Iaroslavl again to serve his five-year term, but on December 12, 1937, after a new trial, he was shot.
5. The head of the local Cheka, Liushkov, did not wait for his natural end when Mekhlis and Frinovsky arrived. On June 13 he defected to the Japanese in Manchuria.
6. The fact that the Soviets were not particularly successful in battle is confirmed by the meagerness and restrained tone of articles in the papers. Announced losses were 236 killed and 611 wounded on our side and 600 killed and 2,500 wounded for the Japanese. They are hardly accurate. In any case, the Japanese began an open attack the next year at Kalkhin-Gola.

## Chapter 20

1. See *Sudebnyi otchet po delu antisovetskogo "pravo-trotskistskogo bloka"* (Moscow: Iuridicheskoe izdatel'stvo NKIU SSSR, 1938). March 2 was the first day of the trial. G. F. Grinko was a prominent Ukrainian Bolshevik. In the last years before his arrest he served as People's Commissar of Finance of the USSR. Liubchenko, a former chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukraine, had committed suicide. The full text of the 1938 trial was published in many languages in 1938. In 1965 Robert C. Tucker and Stephen F. Cohen edited the full text and published it with very useful notes and an introduction by

Tucker. *The Great Purge Trial* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1965). This translation is mine.

2. It is easy to believe that no one closely associated with Yakir or Gamarnik was found suitable for his job. They had to find someone in the People's Commissariat of Finance. The absence of Shmidt and Kuzmichev's names is typical.
3. Member of the Politburo and organizational secretary of the TSK in the first years after the Revolution. Prior to his arrest he had been Deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs and Deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Trade.
4. Immediately after the trial in 1937 no one dared to say such nonsense even in private conversations. When an American diplomat asked a Soviet colleague about the marshal's motives, he was told that Tukhachevsky had taken up with a woman who turned out to be a German spy.
5. People's Commissar of Foreign Trade. During the Civil War he was chairman of the tribunal on Trotsky's personal train.
6. B. S. Gorbachev served in the First Horse Army as commander of a Special Cavalry Brigade. He was killed in 1937.
7. The author of the dreadful, pretentious, and thoroughly inaccurate book, *Marshal Tukhachevsky*, the first Soviet biography of Tukhachevsky to appear after the revelations about the cult of Stalin at the Twentieth and Twenty-Second Congresses.
8. Biographies of Skoblin and Plevitskaia may be found in a book by B. Prianishnikov, *Nezrimaia pautina (The Invisible Web)*, published by the author in 1979. It includes a very thorough picture of the penetration of the NKVD into all corners of the life of the Russian emigration and its organizations throughout the world, and particularly in the rovs. *Nezrimaia pautina* (Silver Spring, Md., 1979).
9. Very little is known about the evil figure N. Ettingon. We have put the information we have been able to gather in appendix V.
10. V. Aleksandrov's work, *Delo Tukhachevskogo*, first appeared in 1960 in the Roman newspaper *Giornale d'Italia*. For a long while he could not find a publisher. It was immediately noted in the Soviet Union, where Khrushchev ordered it be translated into Russian for a narrow circle of high officials. When Khrushchev spoke at the Twenty-Second Congress of the KPSS of "one foreign source" in connection with the causes of the arrest of Yakir, Tukhachevsky, and others, he certainly had in mind Aleksandrov's publication. As far as we know, the official Soviet version is still based on Aleksandrov's book. It appeared as a book in French in 1962, *L'affaire Toukhatchevsky* (Paris: Robert Laffont). We have used the American edition, *The Tukhachevsky Affair*, translated from French by John Hewish (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964).
11. Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties* (New York: Macmillan, 1968). This has been translated into Russian: Robert Konkvest, *Bolshoi Terror*, translated by L. Vladimirov (Florence, 1974).
12. Common sources for both authors. V. Getl (pseudonym, V. Khagen) *Sekretnyi Front*; (W. Hoettle, *The Secret Front* [New York, 1954]); Dzhon Erikson, *Sovetskoe vyshee komandovanie* (John Erickson, *The Soviet High Command* [London, 1962]); U. Churchill, *Vtoroi Mirovaia Voina* (W. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 1 [London, 1948]). Conquest also cited a report by W. Gomulka (*Tribuna Ludu*, November 23, 1961), and a book by the Soviet defector Kri-

vitsky (Krivitsky, *I Was Stalin's Agent* [London, 1940]).

Aleksandrov, in addition to these, made use of Schellenberg's memoirs, Reitlinger's book, *Heydrich and the SS*, Victor Serge's books *Memoirs*, *Carnets* and *The Tulaev Affair*, the archives of V. L. Burtsev and the Russian Historical Commission in Paris, and the émigré press (particularly the publications of B. I. Nikolaevsky). He claims that he received information from conversations with the Czech secret service agents Volganin and Nemanov, with the Polish General V. Grosz and another anonymous Pole, with Soviet defectors F. Raskolnikov, V. Krivitsky, and A. Barmin, with the German communist E. Wollenberg, with the former French premier E. Daladier, and with journalists L. Nord and J. Tabui. Aleksandrov claims that he was asked in 1936 by a German resident in Athens to deliver a letter to the Czechs, allegedly written by Tukhachevsky, expressing his pro-German sympathies. Aleksandrov refused. Schellenberg's memoirs are Walter Schellenberg, *The Schellenberg Memoirs*, translated by Louis Hagen (London: A. Deutsch, 1956). Gerald Reitlinger has written several books on the Second World War, including *The SS: Alibi of a Nation, 1922–1945* (London: Heinemann, 1956). Victor Serge's books are *Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901–1941*, translated and edited by Peter Sedgwick (London: Oxford University Press, 1963); *Carnets* (Paris: R. Julliard, 1952); *The Case of Comrade Tulaev*, translated by Willard R. Trask (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1950).

13. It is interesting to note that although Conquest used a huge number of sources in his book, which was published in 1968, he did not refer to Aleksandrov. Nor do other authors. A possible explanation is that the book is written with considerable artistic license. It contains a large number of inaccuracies. Nonetheless, we think it unwise to ignore the book entirely.
14. Aleksandrov bases his account of the meeting between Radek and Nikolai on the following sources: (1) a conversation with an anonymous witness to that meeting, (2) information received from General Victor Grosz, director of the information branch of the Polish MID, (3) and notes in the Russian émigré paper *Narodnaia Pravda* (Paris) by the famous historian B. I. Nikolaevsky and a certain Bondar, a former NKVD associate, which do not state the date of the meeting or the names of the participants.
15. The matter is especially complicated by the absence of dates. In any case, Aleksandrov is wrong when he writes that Radek was returned from exile and immediately sent to Poland. In August 1936 Radek published several articles in *Izvestiia* during the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial.
16. Here again there is confusion about the dates. Aleksandrov writes that the day they arrived in Paris was very hot. That is strange because Ezhov's appointment occurred in late November.
17. Aleksandrov depicts Skoblin's conversation with Heydrich very colorfully. Insisting on the necessity of removing Tukhachevsky, Skoblin pointed out not only the Red Marshal's anti-Nazism, but also that he was a twenty-third degree Mason and had Jewish ancestors.
18. Aleksandrov and Conquest refer to his book *Sekretnyi Front*. See note 12.
19. In 1945 Berens was captured by the Allies and turned over to the Yugoslavs as a war criminal (as head of the Gestapo in Serbia). In the course of interrogations

Berens gave a great deal of testimony about "the Tukhachevsky affair." Aleksandrov states that this information was transmitted to Moscow. He also gives to understand that he is familiar with Berens' testimony. Berens was sentenced to die and was hanged.

20. Both authors refer to him.
21. V. Aleksandrov does not say how the NKVD came to know about the preparation of the documents. As we recall, the idea originated with Skoblin who decided to "outplay" his Soviet bosses.
22. This money turned out to be counterfeit. Prianishnikov says this and names the sum of 3 million rubles. "Three German agents spending that money in the USSR were arrested by the NKVD. Heydrich was incensed that the Soviets would pay for forged papers with counterfeit paper." See B. Prianishnikov, *Nezrimaia pautina*, p. 347.
23. Some say that Gamarnik was removed from his post as Deputy People's Commissar but kept on as commander of the Political Administration of the RKKA at the same time; but those reports are hard to believe. In any case, nothing was said about it in the press.
24. One Soviet source says he was deputy troop commander of the LVO until November 1936. But we need not accept that as the date of his arrest. It appears that he too was taken at the end of May. The fact that Primakov was officially removed from the staff of the Leningrad Council on June 6 or 7 as an "unmasked enemy of the people" supports that view.
25. In 1936 Aronshtam was chief of the Political Administration of the Special Far Eastern Red Banner Army under Blucher. He was later transferred to the same position in Moscow district. He was arrested in May 1937.
26. They did not save Beria in 1953. Security organs will always lose in a confrontation with regular forces if the latter resist.
27. Only once in the 1940s did he show his old courage. When the men of the MGB came for his wife, Ekaterina Davidovna, Voroshilov brandished a pistol (maybe it was a Mauser!) and said he would not give her up. And he did not.
28. He had earlier run things in Leningrad where he had a reputation for extreme cruelty in interrogations. Zakovsky bragged that if Karl Marx had fallen into his hands he would soon have confessed to be an agent for Bismarck. In January 1938 he was promoted to Deputy People's Commissar. Beria had him killed not long after.
29. As of January 1, 1937. Therefore our data differ somewhat from those offered by Todorsky and E. Genri.
30. That is in the official history of World War II, *The Great Patriotic War, 1941–1945 (Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina Sovetskogo Soiuza 1941–1945)* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1965), pp. 39–40, 51.
31. Yuri P. Petrov, *Partiinoe stroitel'stvo v Sovetskoii Armii i Flote* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1964), pp. 298–317, 341.
32. That is why Stalin never dared to accuse Ezhov publicly. Years after the "Iron Commissar" had been killed, even when Stalin spoke of him to close associates, he had to play the fool. This is how aircraft designer A. Yakovlev reports one such talk. (See *Tsel' zhizni* [Moscow, 1969], p. 509): "Once at home over



dinner Stalin spoke about the lack of good workers in all fields. 'Ezhov was a villain! He killed our best cadres. He was a corrupt man. You call him at the Commissariat and they tell you he's gone to the TSK. Call the TSK and they say he's gone to work. Send for him at home, and it turns out he's in bed dead drunk. He killed a lot of innocent people. That's why we shot him.' " Too bad Nikolai Ivanovich shirked his duties. Had he stayed in his office during working hours, he would still be alive and well today.

33. The Great Purge reached more deeply into the punitive organs than into the other branches of the state apparatus. That is another topic, but one fact is worth mentioning. Of the large number of people who were appointed generals in the NKVD in 1935 only one, S. A. Goglidze, was still at work at the end of the war. And one other, T. Deribas, remained alive—because he had been put in an insane asylum. This must contain some sort of lesson or at least serve as food for thought.
34. We are not speaking of Stalin's *ober*-executioner V. Ulrikh. He lived out his days in comfort and died after the war.
35. The marshal supposedly told this story himself to a correspondent of *Komso-mol'skaia Pravda* in the brief period of unmasking the cult. Observing how others about him were being arrested, Budenny decided to take care of himself. He took several machine guns to his dacha and set them up in the garret. He set soldiers on guard around the clock. He slept only at the dacha and frequently led the all-around observation from the observation post personally. Once when Chekists came for him, Budenny shouted to them through a megaphone about the machine guns and warned them not to cross a line marked in the yard or he would open fire. He then called Stalin. Stalin, as might be expected, answered that he had nothing to do with it. He told Budenny that he had no more idea what was going on in the NKVD than Budenny did, that they might come for him the next day. Budenny responded that he would open fire, which greatly amused the Great Leader. Go ahead, give it to them, Stalin said, chase them off. That is probably folklore, but composed with much understanding of the affair.
36. Ezhov's further fate is hard to follow. At first he remained a candidate member of the Politburo and People's Commissar of Water Transport, which position he had held along with his others since the previous summer. In March 1939 he spoke at the Twenty-third Congress of the Bolshevik Party. Apparently not yet understanding the changes that had taken place, he thought to speak of the achievements of the punitive organs under his leadership. Stalin cut him off and called him a fool. Several months later that fallen executioner was taken to his dacha under house arrest. The Chekists assigned to him were ordered not only to guard him but to see to his needs. Ezhov was regularly so drunk he ceased to look human, which was for him natural. At the beginning of December the guards were told to leave the dacha. Other NKVD employees made the arrest. It is said that Ezhov was put through the usual butchery of physical interrogation, forced to sign what he was ordered, and was shot. The reasons: deceiving the party and the people, unjustified repressions, destruction of the cadres, etc. This happened very late in 1939.
37. See *Velikaia Otechestvennaia Voina Sovetskogo Soiuz*a (Moscow, 1967), pp. 39–40.

## Chapter 21

1. See chapter 14.
2. It is said that Tukhachevsky, sitting on a saddled horse, could do a pull-up, horse and all.
3. Tukhachevsky, *Strategiia natsional'naia i klassovaia* (Rostov na Donu, 1920).
4. In May 1937 he told his sister, "When I was a boy, father wanted to give me a violin. It's too bad he didn't. I'd have become a violinist."
5. They met in the Second House of the People's Commissariat of Defense, across from the Kremlin—that is, on Army territory. The NKVD guards never came into the hall during such meetings. Brutus and Cassius made better use of their opportunity.

## Chapter 22

1. Emphasis here and below is the authors'.
2. In 1957 he told this story to Dr. Nilson: "My wife was pregnant. She cried and pleaded with me to sign the document, but I could not. That day I weighed everything and tried to determine what my chances were of staying alive. I was convinced they would arrest me, that it was my turn. I was ready for that. I was repulsed by all that blood, I couldn't stand it any more. But nothing happened. I was saved, I learned later in some roundabout way, by my colleagues. No one dared tell the higher-ups that I had refused to sign." To report, of course, does take some courage, but apparently one of the literary bigwigs decided to include Pasternak's signature without his knowledge. The motives could have been various. It is possible that there were other similar cases. But no one else has since claimed that to be so, even when there was not a threat. Consequently, the others have taken *that* responsibility on themselves.
3. Daix was clever enough to write in the 1930s, "the camps . . . in the Soviet Union are an achievement, testifying to the complete abolition of the exploitation of man by man." Years later he wrote a sympathetic foreword to the French translation of Solzhenitsyn's novelette *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. See Pierre Daix, *Une Journee d'Ivan Denissovitch* (Paris: Julliard, 1969).
4. *Istoki i smysl russkogo kommunizma* (Paris, 1955), p. 121. This is from the Russian edition. English and French editions were published in 1937. See *The Origin of Russian Communism* (London: G. Blas, [1939]).
5. Arkadi Belinkov, "Poet i tolstiak," *Baikal* (1968), nos. 1–2.

## Chapter 23

1. M. Djilas describes how in a conversation after the war Stalin said seriously that only Belgium and Luxemburg were members of Benelux, that the Netherlands was not. Molotov, who was present, did not dare correct the Great Leader, who apparently went to his grave believing that was so. See Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, translated by Michael B. Petrovich (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), p. 181.

2. *XVII S'ezd Vsesoiuznoi Kommunisticheskoi partii (b)*. 26 ianvaria–10 fevralia 1934 g. *Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1934), p. 11.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.
4. *Vosem' nadtsatyi S'ezd vsesoiuznoi kommunisticheskoi partii (b)*. 10–21 marta 1939 g. *Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow, 1939), p. 14.
5. Mussolini, with whom Stalin, in his own words, had “the very best relations,” wrote in October 1939, “Bolshevism in Russia has disappeared and has been replaced by a Slavic form of fascism.” Earlier that year a special emissary of the German government, Dr. Shnurre, had emphasized, “There is one thing in common in the ideology of Germany, Italy, and the USSR: opposition to capitalist democracy. Neither we nor Italy have anything in common with the capitalist West. Therefore it would be utterly paradoxical to us if the Soviet Union as a socialist nation would wind up on the side of the western democracies.” The foundation for such an evaluation was Molotov’s assertion in an official speech on May 31 that the anti-Comintern pact was only camouflage for the union of the Axis powers against the war.
6. The Germans were most interested in the economic side of the pact, and they began with that. The Kremlin, however, made conclusion of the economic agreement conditional upon general political settlement. They agreed that both pacts be prepared in parallel. The trade agreement, Shnurre-Mikoyan, was concluded on August 19, that is, on the eve of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact. An abundant flow of raw materials (oil) and foodstuffs (wheat) immediately poured into Germany. The German deliveries (machines and equipment) were hopelessly delayed and were never filled. The new agreement of February 11, 1940, was again very favorable for Germany: the term for the Soviet deliveries was eighteen months, for the German, twenty-four months. Besides that, the USSR obligated itself to buy metals for the Reich in third countries to help Germany get around the British blockade. According to Halder, Germany had a monthly shortfall in steel of 600,000 tons. The Germans, on their side, intentionally delayed shipping goods with military significance. If they did give some things, they were defective. Halder recalls the sale to Russia of a heavy cruiser with construction defects. The fools in the Kremlin scrupulously fulfilled all of their obligations on time. In April 1941 they delivered to Germany: 208 million tons of grain, 90,000 tons of oil, 8,300 tons of cotton, 6,400 tons of copper, steel, nickel, and other metals, and 4,000 tons of rubber. A large part of these goods, including the rubber, was obtained in third countries. As a result, on June 22, 1941, German tanks and planes invaded the USSR with Soviet fuel in their tanks. Their crews’ bellies were full of Russian bread. The authors used the Russian translation of Halder’s diaries: Frants Galder, *Voennyi Dnevnik. Ezhednevnye zapisi nach. Gen. Shtaba sukhoputnykh voisk, 1939–1942 gg* 2 vols. (Moscow, 1968–69). These were first available in English: Franz Halder, *The Halder Diaries: The Private War Journals of Colonel General Franz Halder*, introduction by Trevor N. Dupuy, 2 vols. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1976). This is a reprint of the eight-volume work originally published by the Office of Chief Counsel for War Crimes, Office of Military Government for Germany, in Nuremberg in 1946. For the information in this note, see the Westview Press reprint, pp. 101, 158, 174–75.
7. The goon squads got on famously. They looked kindly on the heartfelt agreement

of their masters. At the banquet to celebrate the signing of the pact Stalin proclaimed, "I know how deeply the German people love their great leader [in German, Führer]. Therefore I want to drink to his health." The toast was not provided for by the protocol. For understandable reasons, the text of it did not get into the papers. Recalling the banquet, Ribbentrop said that "in the Kremlin he felt just as if he was among old party comrades." Should we be surprised that the executioners began an intensive exchange of experience and instruments of torture, and also of political prisoners? See Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, "Zakulisnaia istoriia pakta 'Ribbentrop-Molotov'," *Kontinent* (1975), no. 4: 300–320.

8. *Halder Diaries*, vol. 1, pp. 21–22.
9. It is significant that the German invasion began on September 1, the day after the Soviet-German pact was ratified by Moscow.
10. Here are the words as they appeared in the Soviet press on November 1: "The ideology of Hitlerism, like every other ideological system, can be accepted or rejected. . . . But *everybody* understands that ideology cannot be destroyed by force, cannot be killed by war. Therefore it is not only *senseless* but *criminal* to wage such a war, as a *war to destroy Hitlerism!*" [*Pravda*, November 1, 1939; emphasis is ours]. Hitler and Goebbels could not be at the Nuremberg trials because they were dead. Too bad that for other reasons Stalin and Molotov were not among the defendants.
11. The people were given to understand that the Soviet-German rapprochement was meant to last a long while. *Mein Kampf* was published in Russian and for several hours was actually sold in one of Moscow's bookstores. The ban on Wagner was lifted, and the Bolshoi Theater staged the Führer's favorite operas, *Die Walküre* and *Die Meistersinger*. Richard Strauss's works were begun to be performed. One memoirist tells that "Muscovites jammed the concert halls to hear the 'fascist,' 'Hitlerian' music that had been forbidden just yesterday." Iu. Elagin, *Ukroshchenie iskusstv* (New York: Izd-vo im. Chekhova, 1952), Juri Jelagin, *Taming of the Arts*, translated by Nicholas Wreden (New York: Dutton, 1951), pp. 238–39.
12. Shaposhnikov also suggested storming the Mannerheim line, but while simultaneously striking a diversionary blow through Kandalaksha. In Shtern's plan that blow was the main one. Instead, the disposition of the great strategist Timoshenko, who had just been made commander of the Leningrad region (which soon became the Northwestern Front), was accepted. Timoshenko announced, "Never in history have the most powerful fortifications withstood massive attacks. And in general as comrade Stalin teaches us 'there are no fortresses that Bolsheviks cannot take.'"
13. *Halder Diaries*, vol. 1, pp. 51–53.

## Chapter 24

1. Even as it was at that time, the Red Army presented a mortal threat to Germany, which was undefended in the East.
2. The quote is not found in *Halder's Diaries*, but similar information, including some similar wording, is found in vol. 1, p. 751.
3. Ibid.



4. The German diplomat Von Hassel wrote in his diary on June 15, 1941, "A rumor is spreading with astonishing unanimity . . . that a mutual understanding with Russia is inevitable, that Stalin is coming, and so forth." There was a lot of talk in Berlin about a "peaceful capitulation." Stalin's last trump. The rumor had it that in exchange for Germany's agreement to hold back from war he had agreed to let the Germans work the natural resources of the Ukraine and take over the Russian aviation industry. It is highly unlikely, and there is no documentary evidence for it, but how must he have been behaving to give rise to such humiliating rumors. See Ulrich von Hassell, *The von Hassell Diaries, 1938-1944: the Story of the Forces against Hitler Inside Germany, as Recorded by Ambassador Ulrich von Hassell, a Leader of the Movement* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1971), pp. 197-98.
5. When the German Ambassador Von Schulenburg, who not long before had risked his life to warn the Kremlin that an attack was unavoidable, told People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs Molotov on June 22 that war had begun, Molotov cried, "We did not deserve that!" Indeed, Hitler had displayed the basest ingratitude.

## Chapter 25

1. E. I. Martynov, *Tsarskaia armiiia v fevral'skom perevorote*. (Moscow: NKVM i RVS SSSR, 1927), pp. 20-22. The author was a lieutenant general in the imperial Russian army.
2. See G. Zhukov, *Vospominaniia i razmyshleniia* (Moscow, 1969), p. 239.
3. See Harrison Salisbury, *The 900 Days* (New York: Harper, 1973), p. 60.
4. Ibid.
5. Zhukov, *Vospominaniia*, p. 204; N. Kozlov and A. Zaitsev, *Srazhaiushchiasia partiia*. (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1975), p. 61; and a large number of equally respectable authors.
6. See, for example, S. Lototsky et al., *Armiiia Sovetskaia* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1969), pp. 155-56.
7. See, "Sovershenno sekretno. Tol'ko dlia komandovaniia," p. 713; *Promyshlennost' Germanii v period voiny, 1939-1945* (Moscow, 1956), p. 189.
8. See, "Sovershenno sekretno . . .," p. 658; *Velikaia Otechestvennaia Voina Sovetskogo Soiuzia, 1941-1945* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1967), p. 33; *Dnevnik Gal'dera*, vol. 3, book 1, p. 161.
9. Zhukov, *Vospominaniia*, p. 204.
10. *Velikaia Otechestvennaia*, pp. 33, 53; "Sovershenno sekretno . . .," p. 88; *Porazhenie germanskogo imperializma vo vtoroi mirovoi voine* (Moscow, 1961), pp. 582-83.
11. *Dnevnik Gal'dera*, vol. 2, pp. 582-83.
12. Sometimes the troops of satellite countries are counted along with the Germans—twenty-nine divisions, 900,000 men. See *Velikaia Otechestvennaia*, p. 33. We should note, however, that (a) these troops were not immediately used and (b) their combat effectiveness was not high.
13. "Sovershenno sekretno . . .," p. 726.

14. Ibid., pp. 730–31.
15. Ibid.
16. German reconnaissance planes freely violated our border. It was forbidden to shoot them down. Pilots who disobeyed that order were court-martialed. F. I. Kuznetsov, the commander of the Pribaltic region, began a blackout of cities and other potential targets. On June 20 N. N. Voronov, the newly appointed commander of the anti-aircraft defenses, asked Zhukov for permission to extend that measure to other regions. "In reply I heard curses and threats directed at Kuznetsov. A short while later the commander of the Pribaltic region was directed to rescind his order." N. Voronov, *Na sluzhbe voennoi* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1963), p. 173.
17. On June 22 after the German invasion Voroshilov asked I. V. Tiulenev, commander of the Moscow Military District, about that. Tiulenev was embarrassed. They had forgotten about an underground headquarters. Only Admiral N. G. Kuznetsov, the People's Commissar of the Navy, had built such a shelter—on his own responsibility. The leaders of the Navy in general took the threat of war more seriously. As early as March 3, 1941, Kuznetsov, under pressure from the commander of the Baltic Fleet, Admiral Tributs, permitted his men to open fire without warning on German planes violating our airspace. German planes were fired at on March 17 and 18 at Libavaia (Liepaia) and near Odessa. Stalin and Beria chewed Kuznetsov out and forced him to cancel the order. Tributs kept up his pressure on the commissar, and on June 21 the highest state of combat readiness was declared in the Navy. Timoshenko and Zhukov did not do the same for the land forces. The warships of the Baltic Fleet managed to get away into Kronshtadt with few losses. However, the evacuation of the Tallin garrison (50,000 men) was delayed because of Voroshilov. As a result only 12,000 men broke through to safety. See *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, (1966), no. 10: 19–31.
18. This was immediately noticed by the Germans. Halder wrote on the first day of war, "A number of command levels of the enemy knew nothing of the situation, and therefore on a number of sectors of the front there was practically no leadership of the troops from higher headquarters." *Dnevnik Gal'dera*, vol. 3, book 1, p. 27.
19. We paid dearly for that stupidity. Halder writes: "22 June . . . Border bridges across the Bug and other rivers are seized everywhere by our troops *without a battle and undamaged*. The complete surprise of our attack for the enemy is testified to by the fact that whole units were caught unawares in their barracks, airplanes *stood* at the airfields covered by canvas, and forward units suddenly attacked by our troops asked their commanders *what* they should do." Ibid., p. 25; our emphasis. Commanders who asked for instructions from higher command paid a cruel price. Many of them died in battle, some (including the commander of the Belorussian Military District, Pavlov, and his chief of staff, Klimovskikh) were shot as a lesson to others. Their guilt was to wait as usual for orders from above, for orders that either were long delayed, or were senseless.
20. Halder: "There is no trace of strategic retreat. It is entirely likely that the possibility of organizing such a retreat had been simply excluded. . . . It would

seem that thanks to their sluggishness the Russian command will not be able to organize strategic resistance to our attack in the near future. The Russians were forced to accept battle in the formations they were in when we attacked." Ibid., p. 27.

21. Salisbury, *900 Days*, pp. 129, 107.
22. Sorge's report with Golikov's annotation surfaced in the sixties. Golikov, at that time a marshal and deputy minister of defense, kept his head. He climbed up on a table, tore at his mouth with his fingers, screamed, etc. The old veteran was retired. There was no investigation. Other facts reveal that Golikov was not an honest man. Shtemenko recalls that during the war Front Commander Golikov often sent false reports to headquarters: "In those days of the most critical development of events on the Voronezh front it was impossible to get an objective picture from the reports of F. I. Golikov." S. Shtemenko, *General'nyi shtab v gody voyny* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968), p. 109; see also p. 99.
23. Someone named Kindermann in the Federal Republic of Germany has announced very recently that Sorge was freed on exchange. Kindermann claims to have something to do with the deal. According to his version, Sorge was executed in 1949. Out of the frying pan into the fire.
24. *Dnevnik Gal'dera*, vol. 3, book 1, p. 26.
25. Having become Supreme Commander in Chief, Stalin on July 10, 1941, appointed his trusted Horse Army friends to head groups of fronts: Voroshilov (Northwest), Budenny (Southwest), Timoshenko (West). Soon, in August and September the sickly child was laid to rest. As a result of the deplorable results of the experiment the whole troika had to be removed from commanding troops and were not permitted to do so again until the very end of the war. The incompetent strategists were kept on in honorable inactivity at Headquarters and on rare occasions ventured out to inspire the men at the fronts. In 1944 Voroshilov was even removed from the State Defense Committee.
26. The Chief Artillery Administration supplies the troops with artillery and infantry arms but does not direct the combat use of artillery.
27. Voronov, *Na sluzhbe voennoi*, p. 183. Like Raskolnikov yelling at Porfiry, "Who killed anybody!" "You did, Rodion Romanovich, nobody else."
28. Ibid., p. 182.
29. See the memoirs of L. Grachev, "Doroga ot Volkhova," *Druzhba Narodov* (1979), no. 9: 171.
30. Interrogation of Keitel, June 17, 1945 in "Sovershenno sekretno . . ." p. 648.
31. Cited in A. Vasilevsky, *Delo vsei zhizni* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1976), p. 200.
32. Several memoirists including I. S. Konev have said that before that, in 1944, Stalin's petty tutelage over the fronts had noticeably weakened, and commanders received a certain freedom of action. See I. S. Konev, *Zapiski kamanduiushchego frontom, 1943-1944* (Moscow: Nauka, 1972).
33. S. M. Shtemenko, *General'nyi shtab v gody voyny* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968-1973); *The Soviet General Staff at War (1941-1945)*, translated by Robert Daglish (Moscow: Progress, 1970).
34. That was another figment of Stalin's imagination. What importance could it have

had after the conferees at Yalta had agreed to four-power control of Berlin? Three-fourths of the city, gained at awful expense by Soviet soldiers, was turned over to the allies.

35. Stalin, *O Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine Sovetskogo Soiuza* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1948), pp. 196, 197. The following quotations are from pp. 413–15.
36. A. Eremenko, I. Bagramian, B. Vannikov, N. Voronov, N. Kuzentsov have written much more truthfully; but the careful reader must find the *first* editions of their memoirs. In later editions careful editors have removed the sharper criticisms with red pencils and scissors. And they were not able to say all that much the first time around.
37. *Voенно-istoricheskii zhurnal* (1965), no. 12: 60. Similar statistics for the period up to March 31, 1945, may be found in “*Sovershenno sekretno . . .*” pp. 714–15.
38. This finds unexpected confirmation in an official Soviet textbook, *Kurs demografii*, edited by Boiarskii (Moscow, 1967), p. 347. There mortality for all of the armies in the Second World War is put at 30 million. German deaths are said to have been 6 million. If we subtract losses of the Allies and Japan, we find the losses of our army were approximately 21 million.

## Appendix V

1. From the testimony of Leonid Raigorodsky at the trial of Plevitskaia in Paris. B. Prianchnikov, *op. cit.*, p. 353. The family name is spelled Eitingon in this source. Concerning the 20 million marks: even if the witness were right about the sum, the fantastic inflation in Germany in the 1920s would have made the money worth very little.
2. See I. Nestev, *Zvezdy russkoi estrady* (Moscow: Sovetsky kompositor, 1970).
3. So Ezhov had lived in 1939, and Abakumov in 1951–54.



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## Index

- Abakumov, 421 n. 3  
Academy of the General Staff (formerly Frunze Academy): *The Foundations of Defensive Operations*, 189  
Agriculture: collectivization of, 158, 161–62, 403 n. 6; grain production (1920s–30s), 194–96, 285, 405 nn. 1–4, 406 nn. 5–10. *See also* All-Union Academy of Agricultural Science; People's Commissariat for Agriculture  
Air Force Academy, 15  
Aleksandrov, Victor: story of "red folder" documents, 259–61, 411 n. 10  
Alekshev, General M. A., 28  
Alksnis, Commander Ia. I., 179, 301; modern defense tactics (1930s), 182; treason trial (1937), 7, 8, 262, 272–75, 290  
All-Union Academy of Agricultural Science, 297  
Andreev, 221  
Antipov, 253  
Anti-Semitism, 165  
Antonov, A. I.: Berlin operation (World War II), 354; Tambor uprising, 70, 84–87, 88  
Antonov, Aleksander, 76, 248, 289  
Antonov-Ovseenko, V. A., 111, 118, 296  
Antonov-Saratorsky, V., 306  
Apanasenko, I. P., 36, 37  
Arakcheev, General A. A., 78, 106, 396 n. 1  
Arkhangelsky, A., 301  
Army, Red. *See* Red Army  
Arnold, 298, 302  
Aronshtam, L. N., 32, 266, 413 n. 25  
Aseev, N., 309  
Azin, Commander V. M., 32  
  
Babiev, 67  
Bagramian, I., 421 n. 36  
Baidukov, 293, 311  
Bakaev, 237  
Bakh, A., 301  
Bakhmetev, 309  
  
Balitsky, 286  
Baltiisky, 171  
Barbovich, General, 67, 68  
Barbuse, Henri, 314  
"Bataisk Bottleneck," 39  
Bazarevsky, 171  
Bedny, D., 309  
Bekauri, V. I., 181  
Bekher, 309  
Bekhterev, Professor V. M., 236  
Beliaeva, 300  
Beliakov, 293, 311  
Belinkov, Arkady, 104; on sincerity of motives, 317  
Belitsky, G.: on treason trial defendants, 294  
Belitsky, Commander S. M., 137  
Bell, General, 12  
Belorussia, 42; World War II, 327  
Belorussian-Lithuanian Army, 52  
Belorussian military district: military maneuvers (1930s), 182, 183  
Belov, I. P., 280; treason trial (1937), 271–75  
Beneš, Eduard, 260, 261, 262  
Benkendorf, Aleksander K., 310  
Berdiaev, Nikolai, 314  
Berens, Herman, 260, 261, 412 n. 19  
Bergavinov, 253  
Beria, Lavrenti, 165, 246, 281, 332, 391, 392, 413 nn. 26 and 28, 419 n. 17  
Berkhin, I., 106, 107  
Berlin operation (World War II), 352–54, 358  
Berman, Matvei, 238  
Berman-Iurin, 408 n. 8  
Berzin, P. I., 33, 40  
Besiadovsky, 171  
Bezymensky, 309  
Bierut, B., 229, 314  
Biriuzov, Marshal, S. S., 248–49  
Blinov, Deputy General Procurator, 38  
Blitzkrieg, failure of, 187–88  
Blokher, 68  
Blucher, Marshal, V. K., 164, 180; arrest and

- death, 244–46, 276, 281; treason trial (1937) and Stalinist repression, 7–11, 266–75, 290–91
- Blumkin, 409 n. 6
- Bocharov, K.: on Svechin, 175
- Bogolepov, Professor, 197
- Bogomolets, Academician, 301
- Boldyrev, General V. G., 33
- Bolshevik Revolution, 47, 205. *See also* Bolsheviks; October Revolution
- Bolsheviks (Bolshevism), 42, 55, 57, 59, 75, 106–8, 213, 222, 234, 305, 307, 416 n. 5; Germanophilia, 326; industrialization and, 160, 197–201, 403 n. 5; power seized by (1917), 47, 157; reforms following Civil War, 158; repressive measures following Civil War, 77–88; and roots of Stalin's power, 228–32
- Bonch-Bruевич, M. D., 124
- Borisenko, A. N., 284
- Borisov, General V. E.: military doctrine, 124
- Borman, M., 261
- Bortman, Sofia, 296
- Botvinnik, 296
- Brande, 298
- Brecht, Bertolt, 314
- Brest-Litovsk negotiations (1918), 23, 107
- Brusilov, General A. A., 138
- Brykin, N.: on treason trial defendants, 294
- Bubnov, A. S., 37, 82, 111, 115
- Budenny, S. M., 62, 67, 70, 74, 180, 247, 307; on cavalry for defense, 179, 404 n. 4; death of, 280; First Horse Army, 35–39, 43–44, 109; Stalin and, 281; treason trials (1937), 7, 11, 270–75, 290, 414 n. 35; World War II, 420 n. 25
- Bukharchik, 100
- Bukharin, N. I., 113, 203, 208, 220, 221, 222, 224, 239, 300, 303, 305, 398 n. 8; betrayed by Radek, 238; as economist, 101; *Izvestiia* editorship and articles by, 203, 292, 295, 297; Lenin and, 93; Party power struggle (1920s), 91, 92, 95, 97–101; speech at Seventeenth Party Congress, 204–5, 208; treason trial testimony (1938), 252, 258
- Bulatov, 84
- Bulgakov, Mikhail, 313
- Bulin, A. S., 32, 242, 410 nn. 1–2
- Burdenko, N. I., 298
- Burov (head of Don Cheka), 70
- Canaris, Admiral, 261
- Census (1937), 297
- Central Committee, 23, 107, 110, 112, 117, 208; under Lenin, 93, 397 n. 1; and Stalin's rise to power, 93, 94, 95, 96, 98, 99, 100, 398 n. 6; Voroshilov appointed Red Army head (1925), 118–22
- Central Control Commission, 97, 98, 110
- Central Executive Committee (TSIK), 112, 114, 223, 263, 264, 304; All-Russian, 87; RSFSR, 394; trial procedures, 223, 407 n. 3; USSR, 293. *See also* VTSIK
- Central Museum, Soviet Army, 74
- Central Political Department (GlavPUR), 181
- Chakalov, 311
- Chapaev, V. I., 32, 131, 402 n. 6
- Cheka, the, 50, 69, 71, 74, 81, 82, 84, 160, 391; All-Russian Cheka (VCheka), 71, 73, 74; Don Cheka, 70, 72; Lenin and, 402 n. 1; OGPU, 240; of RVS, 143
- Cheremnykh, M., 301
- Cherevichenko, Commander Ia. T., 248
- Chernov, Minister of Agriculture, 107
- Chizhevsky, V., 304
- Chkalov, 293
- Chuguevsk uprising (1922), 106
- Chuikov, V. I., 32; Berlin operation (World War II), 353–54
- Churchill, Winston, 128, 161, 340
- Civil War, 157, 158, 201, 223; in Asian Russia and outposts, 77; Bolshevik “de-Cossackization” program, 48–51; conclusion of, in European Russia, 77; Cossacks in, 28–30, 46–70; Crimean campaign, 43–80; defeat of White Guards (1920), 38–39; Eastern Front (1918–19), 32–34; Entente countries, 128–29; First Horse Army, 43–44, 45; Mironov and, 45–76; origins and prospects of Red Army, 17, 19, 23–25; Polish Front, 40, 41, 42, 395 n. 1; popular uprisings following, 77–88; revisionist history of, 24, 139–46; Tsaritsyn and North Caucasus campaign (1918), 26–31, 46, 47, 51, 140–41. *See also* Red Army; names of military personnel
- Coal mining: Five-Year Plan (First), 197; Five-Year Plan (Second), 199–200
- Collectivization, 160, 194; of agriculture, 158, 161–62, 403 n. 6
- Comintern, 98, 104, 205; anti-Comintern

- pact, 330  
 Commissars: authority of, 263–64  
 Communist Party (Communism), 398 n. 9;  
 "Khopersk communists," 58–59, 63; rise  
 of, 62, 64, 75, 78, 81; as Stalin's tool,  
 103  
 Concessions Committee, 98, 397 n. 5  
 Concessions Committee, Main, 204, 407 n.  
 20  
 Conquest, Robert: story of "red folder"  
 documents, 259, 261–62, 411 n. 11  
 Constitution, Soviet (1936), 292, 294  
 Cossacks, 47, 237; Bolshevik "de-Cos-  
 sackization" program, 48–51; Civil War  
 and, 28–30, 46–70; extermination pro-  
 gram, 75, 160, 407 n. 2; independent  
 thought of, 155  
 Council of Labor and Defense, 92  
 Council of People's Commissars, 51, 91, 92,  
 93, 97, 198, 323, 341, 408 n. 10;  
 Ukraine, 410 n. 1; USSR, 263  
 Council of Trade and Defense, 93  
 Crimean campaign, 43–80; First Horse Army,  
 43–44, 45  
 Cripps, Stanley, 340  
 Curzon, Lord, 40  
 Czechoslovak Legion, 33  
 Czechoslovakia: "red folder" affair, 260–62
- Daix, Pierre, 314, 415 n. 3  
 David, F., 408 n. 8  
 Davidovna, Ekaterina, 413 n. 27  
 Decembrists, 393 n. 6  
 Defense: academics related to, 181; "deep  
 operations" theory vs. strategic defense,  
 183–90. *See also* People's Commissariat  
 of Defense; Strategy, military  
 Defense industry: need for (1930s), 178–79  
 Degtiarev, 182  
 Denikin, General Anton I., 24, 29, 30, 31,  
 35, 59, 63; Crimean campaign, 52, 53,  
 54, 55, 61; defeat of, 146; First Horse  
 Army, 36–37  
 Dennis, Eugene, 314  
 Department of Military Academics (UVUZ),  
 122  
 Deribas, T., 414 n. 33  
 Diakov, Abram, 307  
 Dmitrievsky, A., 124  
 Dmitrov, G., 314; trial in Leipzig, 324  
 "Doctors' plot," 165
- Dokukin, Vladimir, 86, 87  
 Dolivo-Dobrovolsky, 171  
 Don Cheka. *See* Cheka  
 Don Executive Committee, 65, 66  
 Donburo, 52, 407 n. 2  
 Doronin, I., 303  
 Dostoevsky, Feodor: *The Possessed*, and  
 Stalin phenomenon, 165–70  
 Dreiser, Theodore, 314  
 Dreitser, 237  
 Drobnis, 298  
 Drozdov, 68  
 Dubček, 229  
 Dubovoi, Ivan N., 285, 286; arrest of, 266;  
 treason trial (1937), 251, 290  
 Dumenko, Don Cossack Boris M.: execution  
 of, 37–38  
 Dunaevsky, V.: on Svechin, 175  
 Duplitsky, I.: on Svechin, 175  
 Dushenkin, V. V., 67; on death of Blucher,  
 246; *The Second Horse*, 45  
 Dybenko, Commander P. I., 33, 82, 164,  
 241; surrender of Narva, 24; treason trial  
 (1937), 7, 271–75  
 Dzenit, Lieutenant-General, 405 n. 7  
 Dzerzhinsky, Feliks, 33, 65, 66, 71, 82, 163,  
 409 n. 6; death of, 91, 97–98, 117–18,  
 293; Lenin and, 93
- Egorev, V. N., 171  
 Egorov, Marshal A. I., 14, 41, 111, 122,  
 262; *The Defeat of Denikin*, 148; First  
 Horse Army, 35–36, 40, 43; liquidation  
 of, 281; modern military technology  
 (1930s), 180, 188–89; treason trials  
 (1937), 8; war games, 17–19  
 Eideman, Commander R. P., 32, 37, 236,  
 243; *Civil War* (ed.), 145; treason trial  
 (1937), 8, 251, 254, 263, 272–73, 308  
 Eikhe, 163, 317  
 Eismont, 209, 221  
 Engels, Friedrich, 100  
 Entente countries (Russian Civil War),  
 128–29  
 Enukidze, 258  
 Eremenko, A. I., 350, 421 n. 46; First Horse  
 Army, 36  
 Erenburg, I., 280  
 Ettingon, Mark, 259, 391  
 Ettingon, Naum, 259; biographical data,  
 391–92, 421 n. 1

- Evdokimov, I., 223, 224, treason trial (1936), 294
- Evforitsky, Chairman, 84
- Evgenov, Comrade, 87
- Executive Committee: Don Executive Committee, 65, 66; of Leningrad Soviet, 307. *See also* Central Executive Committee
- Ezhov, Nikolai, 163, 227, 229, 230, 238, 240, 286, 301, 302, 408 n. 10, 421 n. 3; and Blucher's death, 246; death of, 414 n. 36; Radek's arrest, 259; Red Army destruction and, 250, 253; "red folder" documents, 261; Stalin and, 164, 165, 413 n. 32; treason trial (1937), 266, 267, 268, 274, 275, 279–80, 281, 297; Tukhachevsky and, 260
- Fadeev, 309
- Famine (1934), 194
- Far Eastern Front: OKDVA reorganized as (1938), 244
- Favorsky (artist), 301
- February Revolution (1917), 84, 106
- Fedin, Konstantin, 309, 313
- Fedko: death of, 276, 281; treason trial (1937), 290
- Feldman, Commander B. M., 164, 243, 289; Stalin and, 282; treason trial (1937), 8, 263, 272–73, 308
- Fendel, I.: on Svechin, 175
- Feuchtwanger, Leon, 227, 297, 299, 303, 305, 314
- Finland: World War II, 327, 328
- First Horse Army, 109; Crimea campaign, 43–44, 45; history summarized, 35–44; Polish Front (1920), 40–43, 144
- Five-Year Plan (First), 197; armaments and, 181–82; collectivization, 102, 104; industrialization under, 197–98
- Five-Year Plan (Second), 211, 297, 343; coal industry, 199–200; industrialization under, 198–202; machine-building, 200
- Flier, Iakov, 307
- Fortifications, border: need for (1930s), 179–80
- Freud, Sigmund, 391
- Frinovsky, Mikhail, 238, 244, 245, 410 n. 5
- Frunze, Commander M. V., 32, 43, 44, 66, 67, 68, 69, 111, 163, 284; Crimea campaign and Civil War victory, 45 ff., 78–80; military reform (1923–25), 106–7, 125–26, 127, 134–36; Party power struggle and liquidation of, 91, 98, 112–18, 318
- Frunze Academy, 8, 236
- Gai, Commander G. D.: treason trials, 243–44, 410 n. 4
- Gamarnik, Ia. B., 9, 179, 307, 308, 413 n. 23; death of, 242, 263, 276, 410 n. 2; named RVS Chairman (1930s), 181; treason trial (1937), 252, 253, 256, 257, 264, 265
- Gamburg, I., 116
- Gamelin, General M. G., 12
- Garkavy, I. I., 240, 286; death of, 243
- Gazukin, I.: on Svechin, 175
- Gekker, Commander A. I.: death of, 243
- Geller, Arkady, 236
- General Staff Academy, 247
- Genghis Khan, 317
- Gerasimov, A., 301
- Gerasimov, S., 301
- Germany: invasion of Poland (1939), 327, 417 n. 9; invasion of USSR (World War II), 332–59, 418 nn. 4–5, 419 nn. 16–20; and "red folder" affair, 258–62; Soviet-German border (World War II), 329. *See also* Hitler, Adolf
- Gestapo, 260, 302; NKVD and, 326, 416 n. 7
- Gidash, 309
- Gide, André, 314
- Gilels, Emil, 305, 307
- Gilels, Liza, 307
- Gladkov, 309
- GlavPUR. *See* Central Political Department
- Gnesina (music teacher), 307
- Goebbels, Josef P., 75, 270, 417 n. 10
- Goglidze, S. A., 244, 245, 414 n. 33
- Gogol, N. V.: "The Inspector General," 407 n. 22
- Goldshtein, Busia, 307
- Golikov, Filipp, 326, 339; World War II, 347–48, 420 n. 22
- Golikov, I. T., 40; treason trials (1930s), 294
- Golodny, 309
- Golubenko, N.: treason trials, 237
- Golubintsev, 171
- Gorbachev, Commander B. S., 256, 280, 411 n. 6; First Horse Army, 38
- Gorbunov, N., 301



- Goriachev, Commander E. I., 280; treason trial (1937), 7, 271–75
- Gorky, Maxim, 51, 163; death of, 408 n. 4
- Gorodovikov, Commander O. I., 66, 180
- Gosplan, 197, 198, 406 n. 12; pogrom, 91, 104
- Gottwald, K., 229, 314
- Grabar, I., 301
- Grain production. *See* Agriculture
- Grakhovsky, P. I., 181
- Great Purge. *See* Treason trials
- Grechko, A. A., 35
- Green partisans (1920s), 80
- Grigor'ev, 59
- Grinko, G. F.: treason trial interrogation (1938), 252–53, 410 n. 1
- GRU. *See* Main Intelligence Administration
- Gubkin, I., 301
- Gulag, the, 78, 238
- Gumilev, N., 73
- Gusev, S. E., 111, 112
- Gusev, S. I., 66
- Hail, 87
- Halder, General Franz, 334, 343, 349, 416 n. 6, 419 nn. 18–20
- Hess, Rudolf, 260
- Heydrich, Reinhard, 260, 261, 413 n. 22
- Himmeler, Heinrich, 260
- Hindenburg, Field Marshal Paul von, 284
- Hitler, Adolf, 14, 75, 133, 175, 205, 221, 303, 317, 417 n. 10; and blitzkrieg, 186–87; German-Soviet relations, 16, 321–31, 416 nn. 5–6, 417 n. 11; and “red folder” affair, 260, 270; view of Poland, 393 n. 6
- Hoettl, V., 260
- Horse Army. *See* First Horse Army; Second Horse Army
- Iampolsky (music teacher), 307
- Ilienkov, 309
- Iliushin, 182
- Illeritskaia, T. A., 37
- Inber, V., 295
- Industrial Party (Prompartia) trial (1930), 222
- Industrialization: Bolshevism and, 160, 403 n. 5; foreign currency sources, 196, 406 n. 10; “Potemkin industrialization,” 220; following Civil War, 158, 159; under Five-Year Plans (First, Second), 197–202
- Insurgency Army, 67, 75
- Ioganson (artist), 302
- Ishini, 84
- Isserson, Commander G. S., 13, 14, 137; military technology, 183, 184–85, 186, 187–88; war games (1936), 15, 16, 18
- Iudin, 309
- Iuon, K., 301
- Ivan IV (“the Terrible”), 6, 155
- Ivanov, Vs., 301, 309
- Izgoev, N., 296
- Izvestiia*, 203; excerpts from, during July 1936–June 1937 period, 292–311
- Japan-Russia border conflicts (1938), 244–46, 290, 410 n. 6
- Kabakov, 210–11
- Kaganovich, L. M., 204, 221, 256, 293, 408 n. 10; Stalin and, 164, 165
- Kakurin, N. E., 87
- Kaledin, 46
- Kalinin, Mikhail I., 53, 60, 65, 70, 72, 73, 165, 221, 264, 398 n. 8; Lenin and, 93; North Caucasus campaign, 28, 29
- Kalinnikov, Professor, 198
- Kalinovsky, K. B., 137, 183
- Kamenev, L. B. (Chairman TSK RKP), 72
- Kamenev, Commander S. S., 32, 37, 65, 67, 82, 109, 110, 117, 122, 203, 205; *Civil War* (ed.), 145; death of, 296; Lenin and, 93; military doctrine, 138; Party power struggle (1920s), 91–98, 398 n. 7; Polish Front, 40–41; speech at Seventeenth Party Congress, 207–8; Stalin and, 150–51; treason trials (1930s), 223–24, 226–27, 234, 238, 294, 408 n. 6; Trotsky and, 151
- Kamo-Petrosian, 350
- Kapablanka, 296
- Karamyshev, P. E., 275
- Karavaeva, 309
- Kasatkin, Dr., 115
- Kashirin, Commander N. D., 32, 112, 164; treason trial (1937), 7, 271–75
- Katsman, E., 301
- Katukov: First Horse Army, 36
- Kazakov, Dr., 408 n. 4
- Kaznachev, 298
- Keller, B., 301
- Kerensky, A. F., 107, 157
- Khakhanian, 286; treason trial (1937), 290

- Khalepsky, Commander I. A., 179, 182, 306,  
329; treason trial (1937), 290
- Khataevich, 180, 286
- Khlopov, Military Attaché, 340
- Khmelev (artist), 311
- Khrulev, Commander A. V., 351
- Khrushchev, Nikita, 303, 305, 307, 352,  
358, 411 n. 10; grain production, 406 n.  
8; myth about destruction of Red Army high  
command, 258; Stalin and, 165
- Khresin, 52
- Kiev, 240, 248, 262, 263, 282
- Kindermann, 420 n. 23
- Kirilenko, 309
- Kirov, S. M., 163, 164, 165, 199, 210, 317;  
death of, 202, 221, 223; speech at the  
Seventeenth Party Congress, 209
- Kirponos, Commander M. P., 248
- Kirpotin, 309
- Kirshon, V., 295
- Kislovodsk: "cave meetings," 93, 94
- Klembovsky, General V. M., 138
- Klimov, B., 301
- Klimovskikh, Chief of Staff, 419 n. 19
- Kniagnitsky, Commander, 48
- Kniazev, 298
- Kochubei, Brigade Commander, 30
- Koestler, Arthur, 314
- Kokkinaki, V., 296
- Kolas, Yakub, 300
- Kolchak, Vice-Admiral Aleksandr V., 24, 35,  
59; Urals defeat (1919), 32, 34
- Kolegov, 171
- Kolkhoz(es): defined, 161
- Kolli, N. Ia., 309
- Komarov, V., 301, 303
- Kommodov, 298
- Komosol, 220
- Konev, I. S.: World War II, 353–54, 420  
n. 32
- Korchagina-Aleksandrovskaia (actress), 303
- Kork, Commander A. I., 122, 243; treason  
trials (1937), 8, 254, 258, 263–75, 308
- Korkin, P. A., 275
- Korkorev, 5
- Korneichuk, A., 301
- Kornilov, General L. G., 28, 67, 68, 259;  
death of, 29
- Korolev, 182
- Korzhavin, N., 168
- Kosior, S., 163, 221, 282, 285
- Kostiushko, A. F.: treason trials (1930s), 294
- Kotliar, General, 351
- Kotov, 182
- Kotovskiy, Gregory, 283, 289, 397 n. 5
- Kovalevsky (military instructor), 47
- Kozlovsky, General, 82
- Kozolupova, Marina, 305, 307
- KPSS, 411 n. 10
- Krasnov, General, 28, 29, 47, 72; Tsaritsyn  
attack, 27
- Kremer, Iza, 391
- Krestinsky, N. N., 65, 96, 252; treason trial  
testimony (1938), 254–57, 411 n. 3
- Kriukov, 51
- Krivoruchko: treason trial (1937), 290
- Kronshtadt rebellion, 73, 75, 77, 80–84,  
150, 160, 288
- Krylenko, N., 304
- Krzhizhanovsky, G., 301; speech at Seven-  
teenth Party Congress, 211, 407 n. 29
- Kuchinsky, Commander D. A., 243, 265
- Kuibyshev, V. V., 32, 104, 111, 163, 165,  
200, 224, 317, 398 n. 8; death of, 221,  
276, 408 n. 4; industrialization of USSR,  
197–201; military technology problems  
ignored by (1930s), 178, 179
- Kulaks: collectivization and, 161–62
- Kulik, Marshal G. I., 35, 328–29, 343,  
344, 350; First Horse Army, 36
- Kun, Bela, 396 n. 6
- Kurchevsky, L. V., 181
- Kurganov, Professor, 358
- Kutepov, General A. P., 259, 391
- Kutiakov, I. S.: Polish Front (1920), 394  
n. 2
- Kutuzov, Dm., 308
- Kuzmichev, Boris, 286; treason trials,  
237–40, 251
- Kuznetsov, Commander F. I., 164, 248
- Kuznetsov, Admiral N. G., 347, 419 nn.  
16–17, 421 n. 36
- Kviring, Emmanuil, 119, 399 n. 22
- Lakhuti (poet), 295, 309
- Langemak, N. E., 181, 182
- Lansere, E., 301
- Lapin, Commander A. Ia., 243
- Lapinsky, P., 300
- Lashevich, Commander M. M., 32, 33, 111,  
112, 118, 119; death of, 400 n. 26
- Lavrenev, 309

- Lavut, P. I., 80  
 Lazimir, P. E., 30  
 Lebedev, P. P., 111  
 Lebedeva, S., 302  
 Lebedev-Kumach, V., 303  
 Legran, B. V., 30  
 Lenin, V. I., 26, 30, 34, 67, 68, 97, 107, 108, 206, 207, 211, 398 n. 6; concept of Party structure, 93; creation of Red Army, 23–24, 108, 109; death of, 94, 111, 297; military doctrine, 126; Mironov and, 53, 55, 56, 60, 62, 65, 66, 71; "On Party Unity" resolution, 78; Polish campaign (1920), 41, 394 n. 5; Stalin and, 150–54; on a standing army, 105–6; struggle for succession to, 92; Tambov uprising, 87; terrorism and, 402 n. 1; and "world imperialism," 394 n. 3  
 Leningrad, 92, 95, 123, 223, 233, 236, 248, 262; writers of, on treason trial defendants (1936), 294–95; World War II, 417 n. 12  
 "Leningrad affair," 165  
 Leningrad Provincial Committee, 94, 397 n. 2  
 Leonidov, L. M., 308  
 Leonov, Leonid, 309, 313  
 Levandovsky, Commander, 122, 280  
 Levin, Dr., 224, 408 n. 4  
 Liapidevsky, A., 303  
 Libedinsky, Iu.: on treason trial defendants, 294  
 Liddell Hart, B. H., 191; on strategic defense, 187, 405 n. 12  
 Lignau, A. G., 171  
 Litovsky, Comrade, 86, 87  
 Litvinov, M. M., 322–23, 325–26  
 Liubchenko, 410 n. 1; treason trial (1937), 252  
 Livshits, Yakov: treason trials (1937), 238, 240, 298  
 Lominadze, 203, 210; Stalin and, 220  
 Lugovskoi (poet), 295  
 Lugovsky, 309  
 Lukin, Commander M. F., 240, 343; treason trials (1937), 8  
 Lukirsky, S. I., 171  
 Lukomsky, General, 31  
 Lurie, M., 408 n. 8  
 Lurie, N., 408 n. 8  
 Lysenko, T. D., 297  
 Maiakovsky, V. V., 80, 230, 396 n. 4  
 Mai-Maevsky, General, 36  
 Main Intelligence Administration (GRU), 340, 341, 391  
 Makarenko, 309  
 Makarov, Commissar, 55  
 Makno, Nestor, 67, 68, 69, 75–76, 77  
 Maksimov-Dikovsky, 224  
 Malenkov, Georgi M., 332, 333; Stalin and, 164, 165  
 Malevsky, A. D., 171  
 Malyshin, 309  
 Mamontov, General: Civil War, 36, 37, 39, 60, 84  
 Mandelshtam, Osip, 313, 314  
 Mandryka, Dr., 115  
 Mannerheim line, 328, 417 n. 12  
 Markish, Perets, 302, 310, 313  
 Markov, 67  
 Marx, Karl, 100, 103  
 Mashkov, I., 301  
 Maslakov (anti-Soviet partisan, 1920), 44  
 Matulevich, I. O.: treason trials (1930s), 294, 298  
 Matveev, Commander, 30  
 Mazai, Makar, 300  
 Medical murders, 224, 408 n. 4  
 Medvedev, Roy: *Philip Mironov* (with Stanikov), 45, 395 n. 5  
 Mekhlis, L. S., 244, 279, 410 n. 5; Stalin and, 164  
 Mekhonoshin, K. A., 30  
 Menshevik trial (1931), 233  
 Menzhinsky, R., 163, 227, 408 n. 4; Shakhty case, 102  
 Meretskov, K. A., 35, 329  
 Merukurov, S., 302  
 Metals production: Five-Year Plan (First), 197–99  
 Mezheninov, Commander S. A., 32, 33  
 Mezhlauk, Commissar, 304  
 MGB, 358, 392  
 Mikeladze, Commissar, 38  
 Mikhailova (wife of Budenny), 281  
 Mikheev, 171  
 Mikitenko, 309  
 Mikoyan, A. I., 165, 293, 416 n. 6  
 Militarism: industrialization and, following Civil War, 158  
 Military Collegium of Supreme Court, 74  
 Military Council, 265, 266, 268, 307, 309;

- regional councils, 263–64; treason trial (1937), 290; of war fronts, 351
- Military districts and fleets (1934–41): leadership of, listed, 379–90
- Military doctrine debate (1920s). *See* Red Army
- Military Revolutionary Council. *See* Revolutionary Military Council
- Miliukov, 295
- Miller, General, 259, 260, 391
- Milyutin, Field Marshal Dmitri, 106
- Minin, S. K., 30; Civil War, 27
- Mirbach, Ambassador, 409 n. 6
- Mironov, Commander Filipp K., 38; military career, and arrest and execution of, 45–76
- Mobuto Sese Seko, 221
- Molokov, V., 296, 303
- Molotov, V. M., 96, 197, 199, 221, 256, 264, 306, 323, 332, 334, 351, 398 n. 8, 408 n. 10, 415 n. 1, 416 n. 5; Five-Year Plan (Second), 198; foreign policy (Germany), 326, 327, 330, 416 n. 6, 417 n. 10, 418 n. 5; Stalin regime and, 164, 165
- Mongols, 155
- Moor, D., 301
- “Moscow trials.” *See* Treason trials
- Moscow writers: on treason trial defendants (1936), 295
- Moskalendo, K. S., 35
- Moskalev, M., 305
- Moskvin (artist), 302
- Movchin, N. N., 183
- Mrachkovsky, 237; treason trial (1937), 251
- MRC. *See* RMC
- Mukhina, B., 302
- Muklevich, R.: military technology problems (1930s), 178–79
- Muralov, N. I., 118; treason trial (1937), 298
- Mussolini, Benito, 221, 416 n. 5
- Muzhik, 70, 88, 100, 101
- MVD-MGB, 392
- Narva, 23, 24, 25, 33
- Naujocks, Colonel, 260, 261
- Navy, Soviet (RKKF): higher commanders of, who died in 1937–39 repressions, 374; leadership of military districts and fleets (1934–41) listed, 379–90; People’s Commissariat of Defense and, 181
- Nemanov, 260
- NEP. *See* New Economic Policy
- Nesmeianov, A. N., 301
- New Economic Policy (NEP), 5, 77, 109, 161; proclaimed (1921), 77
- Neznamov, A. A., 138, military doctrine, 124, 125
- Nicholas I, 156, 393 n. 6
- Nikitchenko, V. G.: treason trials (1930s), 294
- Nikolaev, V. I., 301
- Nikolai, Colonel, 260: “red folder” documents, 259
- Nikolskaia Street, Moscow: history of, 5–7
- Nikulin, Lev, 258, 411 n. 7
- NKO. *See* People’s Commissariat of Defense
- NKVD, 10, 14, 97, 104, 203, 221, 224, 225, 227, 228, 229, 230, 236, 237, 238, 242, 243, 244, 289, 291, 306, 321, 411 n. 8, 414 nn. 35, 36; arrest of military specialists (1930), 171–72; and basic plan for destruction of Red Army, 251–52; Ettingon (Naum) and, 391; generals in, 414 n. 33; Gestapo and, 326, 416 n. 7; “red folder” documents, 258–62, 413 nn. 21–22; treason trials and, 251–52, 265–67, 275, 277, 279, 280, 297, 303
- Nogin, 93
- Northwestern Front (World War II), 417 n. 12
- Nosovich, 47
- Novikov-Priboi, 309
- Obraztsov, N., 301
- October Revolution (1917), 5, 55, 92, 98, 102, 150, 158, 168
- OGPU, 97, 102, 117, 223, 306, 408 n. 10, 409 n. 6; Cheka, 240; Ukraine, 286
- Oistrakh, David, 305, 307
- OKDVA. *See* Separate Far Eastern Red Banner Army
- Okhotnikov, Commander Yakov, 235, 236
- Okulov, A. I., 28
- Olberg, V., 408 n. 8
- Omsk, 33
- Oprichnina, 95, 397 n. 4
- Orbeli, I., 310
- Ordzhonikidze, Serge, 43, 97, 104, 111, 112, 118, 163, 164, 165, 224, 286; death of, 221, 227, 304; heavy industry, 198–99, 406 n. 18; treason trials (1930s), 317
- Orgbuno, 51



- Orlov, Commander V. M., 241, 301; treason trials (1937), 8
- Orthodox Church (Russian), 78, 287
- Orwell, George, 314
- Osoaviakhim* (Defense and Aero-Chemical Development), 5, 393 n. 3
- Ostekhburo (special technical bureau), 181
- Otto, Ambassador, 341
- Ozeriansky, 253
- Palladin, A., 300
- Palovsky, E., 301
- Panferov, 309
- Parkhomenko, Commander A. Ia., 43
- Party Conference: Moscow Provincial (1937), 307–8
- Party Congress: Eighth, 151, 399 n. 10; Eighth (Extraordinary), 254, 257; Tenth, 71, 82, 87, 92, 98, 151, 397 n. 1, 398 n. 6; Eleventh, 126, 399 n. 21; Twelfth, 94; Thirteenth, 112, 153, 398 n. 6; Fourteenth, 92–93, 95, 119, 208, 397 n. 3; Fifteenth, 98, 139–40, 178, 208, 222, 237; Sixteenth, 100, 164, 177, 179, 198, 220; Seventeenth, 12, 161, 178, 194–213, 323; Eighteenth, 321, 324; Nineteenth, 165; Twenty-second, 411 n. 10; Twenty-third, 414 n. 36; Stalin's infiltration of power over, 152–54
- “Party Unity” resolution (Tenth Party Congress), 78, 98
- Pasternak, Boris, 309, 313, 415 n. 2
- Paustovsky, Konstantin, 313
- Pavlenko, 309
- Pavlov, D. G., 247; death of, 248
- Pavlov, Commander P. A., 87; death of, 419 n. 19
- Pavlovsky, Professor, 303
- People's Commissariat for Agriculture: Uzbekistan, 296
- People's Commissariat for Army and Naval Affairs, 73, 263
- People's Commissariat of defense (NKO), 18, 243, 246, 263, 265, 307, 309, 322, 326, 339, 347, 348; created (1934) as sole commanding body of RKKA and RKKF, 181; leadership changes (1934–41), 376–78
- People's Commissariat of Finance, 253, 411 n. 2
- People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry, 408 n. 9
- People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, 256
- Perelman (artist), 301
- Peresyepkin, Captain, 248
- Perm surrender (1918), 33–34; Voroshilov's revisionist history of, 141
- Petenko, Vladimir, 236
- Peter I (“the Great”), 56, 155
- Peters, 209
- Petersburg, 107, 108
- Peterson (Kremlin military commandant), 258
- Petliura, 59
- Petrenchenko (sailor and chairman, revolutionary committee), 82
- Petrograd, 23, 24, 80, 81, 83; revisionist history of 1919 defense of, 142–43
- Petrov, Yu.: *Building the Party in the Soviet Army and Fleet*, 277–78
- Piatakov, 97, 117, 228, 296, 407 n. 19, 408 n. 9; treason trial (1937), 238, 252, 253, 254, 257, 297, 298
- Pieck, W., 314
- Pikel, 237
- Pilniak, 314, 318
- Pilniak, Boris: “Story of the Unextinguished Moon,” 116, 399 n. 18
- Pilsudski, Jozef, 40, 41
- Platonov, Andrei, 313
- Pletnev (sadist), 308
- Pletnev, Dr., 224, 408 n. 4
- Plevitskaia, Nadezhda, 259, 391, 421 n. 1
- Pobedonostsev, 182
- Pogodin, 309
- Pokaliukhin, M., 88
- Poland: First Horse Army offensive (1920), 40–43, 394 n. 5; Hitler's view of, 393 n. 6; pre-World War II policy toward, 322, 324; Russian Civil War, 40, 41, 42, 128, 144–45, 190, 395 n. 1; Soviet war games (1936) and, 15–16, 18–19; World War II, 327, 335, 417 n. 9
- Polikarpov, V. D., 37, 182
- Politburo, 65, 71, 73, 94, 98, 221; and Stalin's rise, 99, 100, 102, 223–24; Ukraine, 262
- Pollitt, H., 314
- Poluian, D., 62, 66, 67
- Popov, Commander M. M., 248
- Poskreybyshev: Stalin and, 164
- Postyshev, P. P., 163, 165, 228, 263, 317
- Power: conditions of, 314–18
- Pozharsky, Prince, 5, 6

- Pravda*, 97, 139, 150  
 Preobrazhensky, 196, 203, 204, 210, 226  
 Prianshnikov, 413 n. 22  
 Primakov, Commander V. M., 164, 282, 413  
   n. 24; treason trials (1937), 8, 11, 242,  
   251, 260, 263, 272–73, 274, 307, 308  
 Prishvin, Mikhail, 313  
 Pritt, John, 314  
 Prokofev, 309  
 Proskurov, I. I., 247–48  
 Provisional Government (1917), 157  
 Pskov, 23, 24  
 Purge. *See* Great Purge; Treason trials  
 Pushkin, 298  
 Puskin, A. S., 169, 293, 304  
 Putna, V. P.: June 1937 treason trial, 272  
 Putna, Commander Vitort K., 122, 243, 244,  
   260, 410 n. 4; treason trials (1937), 8,  
   237–40, 252, 272–73  
 Putzig, Franz, 261
- Radek, Karl, 228, 293, 296, 308, 409 n. 6;  
   “red folder” affair, 259–60; treason trial  
   (1937), 238–39, 254–57, 294–95,  
   297–98, 302–3, 409 n. 6, 412 n. 15  
 Raigorodsky, Leonid, 421 n. 1  
 Rakoczy, M., 314  
 Rakosi, 229  
 Rants, 171  
 Raskolnikov, R. R., 318, 420 n. 27  
 Red Army (RKKA), 8; “deep operations” theory,  
   183–90; demise of oldtime RKKA (1938),  
   190; demobilization problems and Party  
   power politics (1920s), 105–23; Entente  
   and, 128–29; forced labor, 105; higher  
   command of, who died in 1937–39 repres-  
   sions, 365–73; higher command of, who  
   were rehabilitated after 1937–39 repres-  
   sions, 375; lack of opposition to Stalin in,  
   282–91; lack of support for, by inter-  
   national proletariat, 42, 394 n. 4; losses  
   in high command (1937 trial) analyzed,  
   275–81; Marxism and, 105; military doc-  
   trine debate strategy and tactics (1920s),  
   124–38; military reform (1923–25),  
   106–7; military technology modernization  
   and (1930s), 177–93; origins of (1918),  
   23–25, 32; People’s Commissariat of  
   Defense and, 181; personal military titles  
   introduced, 235; political conspiracies  
   against (1930s), 219–40; repression of  
   leaders in, 164; rvs abolished (1934),  
   181; Stalinist basic plan for destruction of,  
   250–58; Stalinist demoralization of,  
   171–76, 316–17; suppression of popular  
   uprising (1921–22), 77–88; training acad-  
   emies of, created, 181; treason trials and  
   slaughter of high command (1930s), 7–11,  
   241–81; Trotsky and, 107–14; tsarist  
   officers, 151; Tukhachevsky and, 12–19;  
   unity of command, 263; Voroshilov’s  
   revisionist history of Stalin and, 139–46;  
   Workers-Peasants’ Red Army, 23; World War  
   II, 327–30, 337, 341–59, 417 n. 1. *See*  
   also Civil War; First Horse Army, Second  
   Horse Army; Separate Far Eastern Red Ban-  
   ner Army; names of military and govern-  
   ment personnel
- Red Army Academy, 233  
 Red Army Day, 24  
 “Red folder” documents, 258–62; Stalin’s  
   use of, 268–70  
 Red Terror. *See* Terrorism  
 Reingold, 237  
 Revolution: culture of, 165–70, 403 nn.  
   8–10, 404 n. 14  
 Revolutionary Military Council (RMC): of First  
   Horse Army, 43; of North Caucasus Mili-  
   tary District, 26, 29, 30; of Republic, 30,  
   41–42, 82; of Southern Front, 48, 79, 80;  
   of USSR (RMC USSR), 32, 91, 111, 112,  
   263; of war front (Civil War), 17  
 Ribbentrop, Joachim von: Soviet-German  
   relations, 326, 330, 341, 416 n. 6  
 Riga Peace (1921), 42  
 Riutin, 113 204, 205, 207; Stalin and, 220,  
   221  
 RKKA. *See* Red Army  
 RKKF. *See* Navy, Soviet  
 RKP, 60, 181; Stalin named General Secretary  
   (1922), 151  
 RKP (b), 111  
 RMC. *See* Revolutionary Military Council  
 RMC USSR. *See* Revolutionary Military  
   Council: of USSR  
 Rokossovsky, K. K., 32  
 Rolland, Romain, 314  
 Rosenberg, Alfred, 75, 260  
 Rostov: fall of (1920), 39  
 rovs. *See* Russian All-Military Union  
 Rosanov, Dr. 115  
 Rozengolts, A. P., 253, 256, 257, 411 n. 5;

- treason trial testimony (1938), 255
- RSFSR, 220
- Ruban, Anastasia, 409 n. 4
- Rudzutak, 165, 199, 253, 256, 257, 317, 398 n. 8
- Russian All-Military Union (ROVS), 259, 260, 411 n. 8
- Rutkovsky. *See* Bierut, B.
- rvs, 56, 263; of Republic, 66; of Southern Front, 48, 50, 141; of USSR, 177, 181
- rvsr, 48, 52, 60, 61, 63, 66, 72
- Rybakov: defense of Mironov by, 63–64
- Rybalko: First Horse Army, 36
- Rychagov, P. V., 247–48
- Rychkov, N. M., 298
- Rydz-Smigla, General, 40
- Rykov, A. I., 112, 203, 220, 238, 296, 305, 306, 399 n. 12, 408 n. 10; Party power struggle (1920s), 91, 92, 97, 99, 100, 398 n. 8; speech at Seventeenth Party Congress, 208–9; treason trial (1937), 300; treason trial interrogation (1938), 253–54
- Sablin, Commander Yu.: treason trials, 237, 409 n. 4
- Salisbury, Harrison, 348
- Samoilovich, P., 301
- Sapozhnikov, 171
- Sartre, J.-P., 314
- Savinkov, 409 n. 6
- Schellenberg, General, 260
- SD (German), 260, 261, 268
- Second Horse Army, 66–69, 70; becomes Second Horse Corps, 69
- Sediakin, Commander A. I., 243, 265; on Svechin, 175
- Sedov, L., 230
- Seger, 171
- Selvinsky, 309
- Semanov, S.: Kronshtadt rebellion, 82–83
- Separate Far Eastern Red Banner Army (OKDVA), 244, 413 n. 25
- Serafimovich, 309
- Serebriakov, 226, 228, 295; treason trial (1937), 238, 297, 298
- Shadenko, 279
- Shadr, I., 302
- Shaginian, M., 295, 309
- Shabty (Rostov) case, 102, 222
- Shapiro-Daikhorsky, N. E., 275
- Shaposhnikov, Commander B. M., 247, 326, 328, 329, 417 n. 12; death of, 280; Stalin and, 281; treason trial (1937), 7, 8, 11, 140, 271–75
- Shatskin, 220
- Shaw, G. B., 314
- Shchadenko, E. A.: First Horse Army, 35, 36, 38
- Scherbakov, 163; anti-Semitism, 165
- Shepelev, Commissar, 43
- Sherbakov, 408 n. 4
- Shestov, 408 n. 8
- Shishkov, V.: on treason trial defendants, 294
- Shkhatratov, 115
- Shkuro, 35, 36
- Shliapnikov, A., 397 n. 1, 398 n. 6
- Shmidt, Commander D. A., 10, 286; treason trials, 236–40, 251–52
- Shnurre, Dr., 416 nn. 5–6
- Sholokhov, Mikhail, 309; *And Quiet Flows the Don*, 51
- Shorin, V. I., 114; Caucasus Front (1920), 39
- Shostakovitch, Dmitri, 287
- Show trials. *See* Treason trials
- Shtemenko, S., 349, 353, 420 n. 22
- Shterenberg, D., 301
- Shtern, 247, 328, 417 n. 12
- Shulga, 391
- Shvernik, N. M., 111, 303
- Sidorenko, N., 296
- Skliamsky, E. M., 62, 71, 111; death of, 118, 399 n. 11
- Skoblin, General Nikolai V., 391; “red folder” documents, 258–62
- Slavin, I. E., 243, 265
- Slepkov, 205, 220
- Slonimsky, 309
- Slutsky, I.: on Svechin, 175
- Smigla, I., 60, 61, 62, 69, 73, 79; Mironov trial, 63, 64, 65
- Smirnov, A. P., 209, 221
- Smirnov, I. N., 118, 237; treason trial (1936), 224–25, 294, 295
- Smorodinov, 242
- Smushkevich, Ia. V., 247
- Snesarev, Andrei E., 29, 140; Stalinist attack on (1930), 171; Tsaritsyn defense, 26–27, 28
- SNK, 74, 263, 264, 304, 350
- Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs): Tambov uprising, 84–88

- Sokolnikov, Commander G. Ia., 39, 48, 51, 52, 109, 118, 226, 228, 293, 295; Party power struggle (1920s), 95; treason trial (1937), 238, 297, 298, 302
- Sokolov, 171
- Sokolov-Skalia (artist), 301–2
- Sokolovsky, V. D., 32
- Solzhenitsyn, Aleksander, 313, 415 n. 3
- Sorge, Richard, 341, 348, 419 nn. 22–23
- Sorin, Vl., 305
- Southern Front (Civil War), 30, 36, 48, 51, 52, 54, 57, 61; independent Southern Front formed (1920), 66; Voroshilov's revisionist history of, 142–44
- Southern Screen forces: in Civil War, 28
- Southwest Front (1920), 40, 66
- Soviet society: role of, 312–18
- Speransky, A., 301, 303
- Spiegelglass, Aleksander, 260
- Spirin, Major, 305
- SRS. *See* Socialist Revolutionaries
- Stakhanov, Aleksei, 300
- Stalin, Josef V., 3, 11, 17, 43, 107, 110, 118–19, 133, 212, 217, 297, 398 n. 6, 415 n. 5; analogy of, with Dostoevsky's *Possessed*, 165–70; on Benelux countries, 415 n. 1; Civil War historiography, 24–25; collectivization, 102, 104, 194; as commander (World War II), 349–59, 420 n. 25; consolidation of power by, within the Russian system (1920s), 91–104, 149–70; cult of personality and, 159, 403 n. 4; death of, 165; and demoralization of Red Army (1930–31), 171–76; Dzerzhinsky's death, 117–18; Eastern Front and (1918–19), 32–34; Ettingon (Naum) and, 391–96; Ezhov and, 164, 165, 413 n. 32; Frunze's death, 117; General Secretary of RKP (1922), 151; grain production figures (1920s–30s), 194–95, 405 n. 2, 406 n. 6; Kameney (S. S.) and, 150, 151; Kronshtadt uprising, 150; Kulik and, 36; Lenin and, 150–54; and manipulation of Soviet society, 312–18; methods used against rivals, 91; military doctrine (1930s), 126; modernization of Red Army military technology and (1930s), 177–93; opposition to (1930s), 220–21; Party Congress (Seventeenth) and his ascendancy over (1934), 194–213; Party Congress (Eighteenth) report by, 321; patron of First Horse Army, 35; Polish Front (1920), 41; Politburo and, 99, 100, 102; “professional conspirator,” 164; rapprochement with Hitler, 16, 321–31, 416 nn. 5–6, 417 n. 11; Red Army and (Voroshilov's revisionist history), 139–46; Red Army repression and slaughter of high command (1930s), 163–64, 219–81, 409 nn. 5–7; “red folder” affair, 258–62, 268–70; removed from Revolutionary Military Council (1920), 41–42; roots of power of, 163–64, 228–32, 314–18; show trials (*see* Treason trials); Soviet constitution (1936), 292, 294; speech at Red Army Academy (May 4, 1935), 233–35; as statesman, 159; style of leadership, 164; Trotsky and, 151; Tsaritsyn campaign, 26–30, 47; Tukhachevsky and, 12–13, 269, 282, 286–90, 407 n. 32; use of Communist Party by, 103; war games (1936), 18–19; Western apologists for, 314; and “world capitalism,” 40; World War II strategy, 335–38; Zinoviev and, 151. *See also* Five-Year Plan (First, Second); Treason trials; World War II
- Stanikov, Sergei: *Philip Mironov* (with Medvedev), 45, 395 n. 3
- Stavrogin, 310
- Stavsky, 295, 309
- Sten, 204, 207
- Stoliarsky (music teacher), 307
- Strategy, military: “deep operations” theory, 183–90; offensive, 180, 404 n. 6; strategic defense theory, 174–90, 405 n. 12
- Stroilov: treason trial (1937), 302
- Stuchenko, General A. T., 37
- Sudoplatov, General, 392
- Sukhov, V. G., 171
- Suleiman, General A. M., 138
- Supreme Soviet of USSR: elections (1937), 241
- Surkov, 309
- Suslov, P.: on Svechin, 175
- Suvorov, 17, 171
- Svanidze, A., 304
- Svechin, A. A., 15, 289, 347; attack on, by Stalinists (1930), 172–76; biographical data, 130–31; death of (1938), 186; military doctrine, 124–25, 127, 128, 131–35, 138, 174–75, 186–87, 188; *Strategy*, 131, 401 n. 8; on wartime economic policy, 404 n. 5



- Sverdlov, Ia., 30, 51, 150  
 Svshnikov, 307  
 Syrtsov, S. I., 48; "de-Cossackization" program, 395 n. 6; Stalin and, 220, 407 n. 2  
 Sytin, General P. P., 30  
 Szeptitski, General, 40
- Tamboy uprising (1920 ff.), 75, 77, 84–88, 160, 289  
 Tanev, 324  
 Tank technology, 182, 405 n. 7  
 Tarasova (artist), 311  
 Tarle, Professor E., 293, 305, 308  
 TASS, 348  
 Terpigorev, A., 301  
 Terrorism, 238, 253, 317; Great Purge (1930s), 223–32; Lenin and, 402 n. 1; "Moscow center," 223; Red Terror, 30, 160  
 Thorez, M., 314  
 Tikhonov, N., 309, 310  
 Timoshenko, Commander S. K., 35, 36, 38, 133, 248; World War II, 328, 339, 346, 347, 352, 417 n. 12, 419 n. 25  
 Tiulenev, I. V., 419 n. 17; First Horse Army, 36  
 Tiutiunnik (Polish mercenary), 77  
 Todorsky, Lieutenant General A. I., 120; on arrest of military specialists (1930), 171–72; war games (1936), 15  
 Togliatti, P., 314  
 Tokarev, 182  
 Tokmakov, 85  
 Tolmachev, 221  
 Tolstoi, A., 300, 309, 310; on treason trial defendants, 294  
 Tomin, N. D., 69  
 Tomskey, M. P., 203, 254, 398 n. 8; death of, 295–96, 408 n. 7; Party power struggle (1920s), 91, 92, 97, 99, 100; speech at the Seventeenth Party Congress, 208, 209  
 Tovstukha: Stalin and, 164  
 Trade unions, 78, 396 n. 2  
 Treason trials, 1936–38 (Great Purge): 1936, 293–97; January 1937, 297–304; May–June 1937, 7–11, 262–81, 304–18; 1938, 252–58, 308, 410 n. 1, 411 n. 3; *Izvestiia* reports, 293–96; NKVD role in, 251–52, 265–67, 275, 277, 279, 280, 297, 303, 414 n. 33; political background, 219–32; protesters against, 317
- Trenev, 309  
 Triandafilov, V. K., 13, 137, 407 n. 32; military doctrine, 177, 179, 183, 186; *The Nature of Operations of Modern Armies* (1929), 180  
 Tributs, Admiral V. F., 419 n. 17  
 Trifonov, Commissar V., 52, 56  
 Trotsky, L. D., 41, 42, 77, 104, 154, 196, 210, 219, 230, 236–38, 294, 295, 299, 403 n. 10, 409 n. 6; death of, 391; exile of, 99, 101; heads Revolutionary Military Council (1918), 30; Kronstadt rebellion, 82; Lenin and, 93; military doctrine, 125–26, 127, 129; Mironov and, 48, 52, 53, 60, 62, 63, 64, 72; Party power struggle (1920s), 91–99; People's Commissar of War, 94; Red Army, 107–14; and "red folder" documents, 268; Stalin and, 151; testimony against, at 1938 treason trial, 252–55, 257; Zinoviev on, 207  
 Trotskyism, 101–2, 112–13, 298, 300, 301; "right-Trotskyite bloc," 252–58  
 Troyanker, 308  
 Trutko, F.: military doctrine, 125  
 Tsander, 182  
 Tsarism: fall of, 156, 402 n. 3  
 Tsaritsyn, 25, 328  
 Tsaritsyn campaign (1918), 26–31, 46, 47, 51; Voroshilov's revisionist history of, 140–41  
 Tseitlin (music teacher), 307  
 TSIK. *See* Central Executive Committee  
 Tsiurupa, 30  
 TSK, 48, 51, 53, 60, 66, 74, 75, 142, 160, 202, 203, 204, 213, 220, 221, 224, 227, 238, 264, 279, 285, 295, 304, 350, 398 n. 6; plenum agenda (1934), 305  
 TSK (b), 241  
 TSK KP/b/ Ukraine, 307  
 TSK RKP, 72  
 TSK RKP (b), 49, 50  
 TSK VKP (b), 139, 241  
 TSKK, 100, 220, 221  
 Tukhachevsky, Marshal Mikhail N., 3, 32, 37, 40, 75, 112, 118, 164, 328, 402 n. 7, 407 n. 32; arrest of military specialists and (1930), 172–76; biographical data, 286–90, 411 n. 7; Bolshevism, 287; career in RKKA, 12–19, 91, 122–30; *Civil War* (ed.), 147; on German (Hitler)

- threat, 326; Kronshtadt rebellion, 77, 82–84; Leningrad exile of, 12–13, 233; *Military Plans of Contemporary Germany* (1935), 14; military strategist, 14–19, 136–37, 180, 182, 183, 186, 189; modernization of Red Army military technology (1930s), 177, 181; “The Nature of Border Fighting,” 15; *New Questions of War* (1932 ff.), 14, 393 n. 1; Polish Front (1920), 40, 41, 42; public charges against his supporters (1938), 252–58, 411 nn. 4 and 10; “red folder” documents, 259–61; speech at Seventeenth Party Congress, 212, 407 n. 32; as Stalinist, 12–13, 282, 291, 415 nn. 2 and 4; Tambov uprising, 84, 87; treason trials (1937), 8, 10, 11, 238–39, 241, 242, 262–75, 306–7, 308; war games (1936), 15–19; writings by, 304
- Tupikov, General, 321
- Tupolev, 182
- Turgenev, Ivan S., 169
- Tvardovsky, Aleksander, 313
- Uborevich, Commander I.P., 13, 32, 38, 164; strategic defense, 179, 183; treason trials (1937), 8, 10–11, 241, 242–43, 254, 263–75, 307, 308; war games (1936), 15
- Uglanov, 99, 100, 113, 296
- Ukraine, 106, 241, 248, 252, 284, 285, 286; grain supplies, 196; military arrests in (1936), 236–37; military maneuvers (1935, 1936), 13–14, 182–83; and Polish campaign (1920), 42; World War II, 327, 351
- Ulbricht, W., 314
- Ulianov, V. I., 72
- Ulianova, M. I.: death of, 309
- Ulrikh, V., 270, 414 n. 34
- Ulrikh, Military Jurist V. V.: treason trials (1930s), 7, 11, 294, 298
- Umansky, K., 340
- Unshlikht, 111, 112, 163
- Uritsky, S. P., 82; treason trial (1937), 290
- Urvantsev, N. N., 301
- UVUZ. *See* Department of Military Academies
- Uzbekistan, 296
- Vainer, 309
- Vakulin, Commander, 70, 71
- Vannikov, B. L., 329, 421 n. 36
- Vareikis, I. M., 32, 199, 200, 253
- Varfolomeev, Commander N. E., 137, 183
- Vasadze, Ak., 296
- Vasilevsky, Colonel A. M., 247, 349, 357
- Vasiliev, 307
- Vasilieva, M. M., 299
- Vatsetis, Commander I. I., 30, 32, 109
- Vatulin, N. F., 248
- Vatutin, 352
- Vavilov, N. I., 297, 301, 310
- Vavilov, Sergei I., 309, 310, 318
- VCheka. *See* Cheka: All-Russian
- Veger, V., 286, 301
- Verkhovsky, A. I., 138, 171
- Verkhovsky, B. K., 171
- Veshenskaia (Cossack) uprising (1919), 51, 52, 53
- Vinogradov, Dr., 408 n. 4
- Violence: acceptance of by Russian people, 155
- Vize, V. Iu., 301
- Vladimirov, M., 79
- Vodopianov, M., 303, 306
- Volf, 309
- Volpe, Commander A. M., 137
- Volsky, K., 299, 309
- Volunteer Army: in Civil War, 28–31, 38
- Von Hassel, Ulrich, 418 n. 4
- Von Schulenburg, Ambassador, 418 n. 5
- Voronov, N. N., 247, 419 n. 16, 421 n. 36; World War II, 351
- Voroshilov, Marshal Kliment E., 8, 11, 13, 38, 39, 43, 67, 82, 111, 112, 199, 221, 240, 242, 245, 295, 297, 326, 328, 329, 394 n. 2, 413 n. 27, 419 n. 17; appointed Red Army head (1925), 118–22; Civil War, 26, 27, 28, 30, 32, 33, 47; First Horse Army, 35, 109; on Frunze, 115, 116; and modern military technology (1930s), 177–78, 179, 180, 181, 188, 190; Party power struggle (1920s), 91; Red Army destruction and, 171, 251–52, 274, 279; revisionist history of Stalin and Red Army by, 139–46; Stalin and, 164–65, 264, 274–75; *Stalin and the Red Army*, 91, 104, 121, 398 n. 8; treason trial (June 1937), 309; war games (1936), 15; World War II, 420 n. 25
- Voznesensky, 164
- VSNKh, 97, 104, 197, 198, 204; Presidium, 203
- VTSIK, 55, 56, 64, 65, 70, 72

- Vyshinsky, Andrei Y., 7, 237, 268, 274, 275, 393 n. 5; criminal complicity theory, 225; on democracy, 306; treason trials (1930s), 238–39, 252–58, 294, 295, 296, 298, 302, 303, 409 nn. 5 and 7
- Vyshnevsky, 309
- Vysotsky, V., 171, 301
- Wallace, S., 340
- War games: Red Army exercises (1936), 15–19
- White Guards: Civil War, 32–34, 38–39
- Wiener, Norbert, 14
- Workers-Peasants' Red Army. *See* Red Army
- Working Peasants, Union of, 85
- World War I, 46, 201
- World War II, 24, 417 n. 1, 418 nn. 4–5, 12, 419 nn. 16–20, 420 nn. 22, 25, 34, 421 n. 38; beginning of, 327; Berlin operation, 352–54, 358; build-up to German attack on USSR, 321–38, 416 n. 6; German invasion of USSR, 332–59; Soviet-German border, 329
- Wrangel, General P. N., 24, 40, 43, 44, 45, 66, 67, 68, 72, 160; defeat of, 77–80
- Yablochkina (artist), 300
- Yagoda, G. G., 165, 224, 227, 230, 238, 259, 260, 295, 301, 305–6; treason trials (1930s), 252, 253, 258
- Yakir, Commander Ion E., 3, 13, 40, 75, 122, 164, 236, 237, 243; biographical summary, 283–86; Bolshevism, 285; “de-Cossackization” program, 49; head of Kharkov Tank Factory, 182; Red Army modernization, 179, 181; Stalin and, 282, 283–86, 287, 289, 291; strategic defense, 182, 183; treason trials (1930s), 8, 10, 11, 239–40, 241–42, 251, 252, 254, 307, 308, 410 n. 2
- Yakir, N. E.: treason trial (1937), 262–75
- Yakir, P., 240
- Yakir, S. L., 297
- Yakovlev, A., 253, 413 n. 32
- Yanushkevich, General, 124
- Yaponchik, Mishka, 283
- Yasensky, Bruce, 298, 299, 302, 313
- Yuderich, 24, 35
- Zaionichkorsky, A. M., 124
- Zakharov, M. V., 248
- Zahovsky, L. M., 261, 413 n. 28; treason trial (1937), 275
- Zatonsky, V. P., 202
- Zedin, Commissar K. Ia., 26
- Zelensky, 409 n. 5
- Zemliachka, Rozaliia, 80
- Zharov, Aleksander, 301
- Zhdanov, A. A., 163, 165, 227, 297, 305, 333, 348; death of, 408 n. 4; USSR foreign policy, 323, 325
- Zhilin, General, 133
- Zhukov, Marshal G. K., 133, 248; World War II, 339, 346, 347, 349, 353–54, 357, 419 nn. 16–17
- Zinoviev, Grigory Y., 107, 110, 112, 113, 114, 122, 203, 204, 205, 223, 224, 236; Party power struggle (1920s), 91, 92, 93, 94, 96, 97, 98, 104, 397 n. 2, 398 n. 7; speech at Seventeenth Party Congress, 206–7, 208; treason trials (1930s), 226–27, 234, 238, 294, 408 n. 6; Trotsky and, 151, 207
- Zozulia, E., 295
- Zviagintsev, O. E., 301





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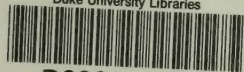
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